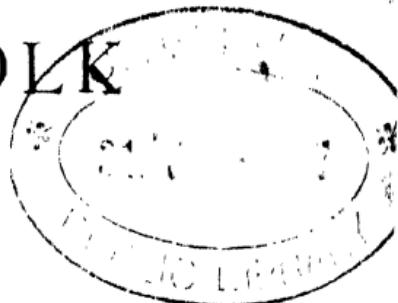


THE
MAD FOLK
OF
SHAKESPEARE.



PSYCHOLOGICAL ESSAYS.

REFERENCE

BY

JOHN CHARLES BUCKNILL, M.D., F.R.S.,

FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED.

London and Cambridge:
MACMILLAN AND CO.

1867.

Cambridge:
PRINTED BY JONATHAN PALMER.

REFERENCE

TO

Augustus Stowey, Esquire,

OF

KENBURY, NEAR EXETER,

THIS WORK

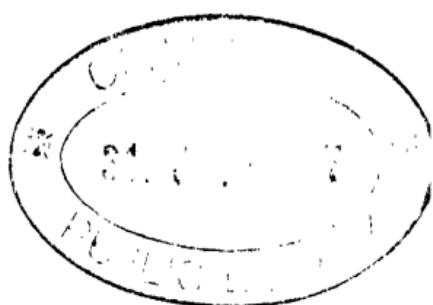
IS DEDICATED AS A MARK OF SINCERE REGARD,

AND IN REMEMBRANCE

OF MANY YEARS OF KINDLY INTERCOURSE,

BY HIS FRIEND AND NEIGHBOUR,

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THE shoemaker, who criticised the work of the great painter of antiquity, was listened to with respect, so long as he confined his observations within the limits of his own practical knowledge. If in the following Essays the author has ventured to submit the works of another great master of art to the test of comparison with the special knowledge of a workman, he trusts that his opinions may receive that consideration to which a long and extensive experience of the irregular phenomena of mind may appear fairly to entitle them. As the shoemaker doubtless found it a more easy and agreeable occupation to criticise painted sandals than to make leather ones, so the author of these Essays has found the study of his own science, as it is represented in the works of the immortal dramatist, a delightful recreation from the labours of his practice. If he could by any charm transfer to his readers but a small portion of the pleasure which he has enjoyed

in writing the following pages, he would need to make no apology for their publication, nor entertain any fear of their favourable reception. To have the mind diverted from the routine of professional work, or of professional study, is both wholesome and enjoyable, not for the reason that Lord Bacon gives for physicians so frequently becoming antiquaries, poets, humourists, etc., namely, because “they find that mediocrity and excellence in their own art maketh no difference in profit or reputation;” but because change in the habitual subject and mode of thought is a source of mental recreation and delight. These pages have, indeed, been written in the leisure hours of a busy life ; and although the constant care of six hundred insane persons has afforded ample opportunities of comparing the delineations of the psychological artist with the hard realities of existence, it has also denied that leisure which would have enabled the writer to have expressed his opinions in a form and manner more satisfactory to his judgment, and more worthy of the subject. Under these circumstances they have necessarily been written in some haste, and have been sent to the printer with the ink yet wet : they have also been written in the country, so that neither their matter or manner could be submitted to friendly advice. The author tenders these explanations in excuse for imperfections of literary execution, which,

he trusts, may in some measure be atoned for by other qualities in the work, which comes fresh from the field of observation. He claims, indeed, that indulgence which would readily be accorded to a writer whom the active business of life had led into some region of classic interest, and who, taking his ease at his inn, should each evening compare the descriptions of an ancient historian with the scenes he *had* just beheld during the burden and heat of the day ; the fresh and immediate nature of his knowledge would justify him in assuming a certain kind of authority, without at each step establishing the grounds of *his* judgment. The author, however, has endeavoured to bear in mind that he was writing, not upon the subject of his own knowledge, but upon that of Shakespeare's ; and although it would have been easy to have supported and illustrated his opinions by the details of observation and the statement of cases, he has abstained from doing so, preferring sometimes to be dogmatic rather than tedious.

Although for many years the dramas of Shakespeare have been familiar to the author, the extent and exactness of the psychological knowledge displayed in them, which a more diligent examination has made known, have surprised and astonished him. He can only account for it on one supposition, namely, that abnormal conditions of mind had at-

tracted Shakespeare's diligent observation, and had been a favourite study. There is no reason to suppose that when Shakespeare wrote, any other asylum for the insane existed in this country than the then poor and small establishment of Bethlem Hospital, the property of which had been taken from the monks by Henry the Eighth, and presented to the city of London for conversion into an asylum, only seventeen years before the poet's birth. In his time the insane members of society were not secluded from the world as they are now. If their symptoms were prominent and dangerous, they were, indeed, thrust out of sight very harshly and effectually ; but if their liberty was in any degree tolerable, it was tolerated, and they were permitted to live in the family circle, or to wander the country. Thus every one must have been brought into immediate contact with examples of every variety of mental derangement ; and any one who sought the knowledge of their peculiarities would find it at every turn. Opportunities of crude observation would, therefore, be ample ; it only required the alembic of a great mind to convert them into psychological science.

Shakespeare's peculiar capacity for effecting such conversion would consist in his intimate knowledge of the normal state of the mental functions in every variety of character, with which he would be able to

compare and estimate every direction and degree of aberration. His knowledge of the mental physiology of human life would be brought to bear upon all the obscurities and intricacies of its pathology. To this power would be added that indefinable possession of genius, call it spiritual tact or insight, or whatever other term may suggest itself, by which the great lords of mind estimate all phases of mind with little aid from reflected light. The peculiarities of a certain character being observed, the great mind which contains all possibilities within itself, imagines the act of mental transmigration, and combining the knowledge of others with the knowledge of self, every variety of character possible in nature becomes possible in conception and delineation.

That abnormal states of mind were a favourite study of Shakespeare would be evident from the mere number of characters to which he has attributed them, and the extent alone to which he has written on the subject. On no other subject, except love and ambition, the blood and chyle of dramatic poetry, has he written so much. On no other has he written with such mighty power.

Some explanation seems due of the title chosen for this work. Since psychology strictly implies all that relates to the soul or mind of man in contradistinction to his material nature, the character of Othello

might have been placed under this title with as much propriety as that of Lear. The derivation and original use of a term, however, not unfrequently differ from its acquired and permanent use, and the term psychology has, of late years, been used to denote all that relates to the department of science which takes cognizance of irregularities and aberrations and diseases of the mind. It serves not to object that the derivation of the word is opposed to such employment, for the same may be said of half the words in the language. Mental pathology would be a far more exact, but also a more cumbrous term ; and no further apology need be made for the modern use of the shorter term, than that no other suits the purpose to which it is applied with equal convenience. One chooses words, like servants, for their usefulness and not for their pedigree.

The author had intended to append to the following pages a chapter on Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine. When, however, it was partly written, he found that the freedom of expression which the great dramatist had permitted himself on medical subjects was such as would either have prevented the admission and consideration of important passages, or have forbidden the present work to many readers, whom it is hoped may otherwise honour it with a perusal. The inconvenience therefore of a separate publication has been preferred.

It only remains to add that three of the following essays have already appeared in the pages of the "Quarterly Journal of Mental Science," a publication edited by the author.

EXMINSTER,

May 12th, 1859.

CONTENTS.

	Page
MACBETH	I
HAMLET	48
OPHELIA	144
KING LEAR	160
TIMON OF ATHENS	236
CONSTANCE	268
THE MELANCHOLOY JAQUES	292
MALVOLIO. CHRISTOPHER SIV. COMEDY OF ERRORS	314



PSYCHOLOGICAL ESSAYS.

MACBETH.

MACBETH, the most awful creation of the poetic mind, is a study every way worthy of those to whom the storms of passion present the frequent cause of mental disease. The historian studies the temper of the mind in its most ardent heats, that he may gain a clue to the causation of human events ; the statesman, that he may obtain foreknowledge of tendencies to human action ; and the psychologist, for the more beneficent purpose of acquiring that knowledge as the means of alleviating the most terrible of calamities, and of doing that which the terrified physician in this tragedy dared not attempt, of " ministering to the mind diseased." The philosopher studies the laws of storms, that he may teach the mariner to avoid the destructive circle of their influence ; and the physician, whose noble object of study is the human mind, seizes every opportunity of making himself acquainted with the direction and events of its hurricane movements,

that he may perchance lead some into a port of safety, or at least that he may assist in refitting the torn and shattered barque. But to stand on one side and calmly contemplate the phenomena of human passion, like the chorus in the old Greek drama, is the lot of few. When the elements of human passion are in fierce strife, there is no near standing-place for the foot of science, like the deck of the great steamer which allowed Scoresby to measure the force and speed of the wild Atlantic wave. The vortex of passion tends to draw in all who float near; and tranquil observation of its turmoil can only be made from a standing-point more or less remote. On all possible occasions, indeed, it behoves the man whose object of study and of care is the human mind, to observe for himself its phenomena, and to test its springs and sources of action; but it behoves him also to accept the testimony of those who have weathered the storm, and gratefully to appreciate any assistance he may obtain from others who contemplate the same phenomena from different points of view to his own: and there is no one from whom he will derive help of such inestimable value, as from the man whose high faculties enable him to contemplate human nature, as it were, from within. The Poet or maker, the same intrinsically with the Seer or gifted observer, is the best guide and helpmate with whom the psychologist can ally himself. He is like the native of a country to whom mountain and stream

and every living thing are known, acting as instructor and guide to the naturalist, whose systems and classifications he may hold in slight esteem, but with whom he has a common love and a more personal knowledge for all their objects. Compared with the assistance which the psychologist derives from the true poet, that which he obtains from the metaphysician is as sketchy and indistinct as the theoretical description of a new country might be, given by one who had never been therein, as the description of Australia might be, drawn from the parallel of its climate and latitude with South America or China.

Above all scers with whom a beneficent Providence has blessed mankind, to delight and instruct them with that knowledge which is so wondrous that it is falsely called intuitive, is that heaven-born genius, who is the pride and glory of this country, the greatest poet of all ages, and preeminently the most truthful analyst of human action. Shakespeare not only possesses more psychological insight than all other poets, but more than all other writers. He has been aptly called "a nature humanized." He has above all men the faculty of unravelling the motives of human action. Compared with his profound knowledge of the surface and depths of the human soul, the information of other great minds, even of such wondrously vigorous intelligences as those of Plato and Bacon, were obscure and fragmentary. Had he not been a poet, what might he not have been as a philo-

sopher? What essays might he not have written? What Socratic dialogues, sparkling with wit, seething with humour, saturated with truth, might he not have written upon politics and philosophy? An American writer has lately started the idea that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon! Verily, were it not for the want of power of imagination and verbal euphony which is displayed in Bacon's Essays, one might rather think that they were some of Shakespeare's own rough memoranda on men and motives, which had strayed from his desk.

Although *Macbeth* is less pervaded with the idea of mental disease than its great rival tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Lear*, and contains fewer scenes in which phases of insanity are actually represented, it is not only replete with passages of deep psychological interest, but in the mental development of the bloody-handed hero and of his terrible mate, it affords a study scarcely less instructive than the wild and passionate madness of *Lear*, or the metaphysical motive-weighing melancholy of the Prince of Denmark.

It is not within the scope of our intention to comment upon the artistic perfection of this work. This has already been done, and done well, by professed writers of dramatic criticism—by Schlegel especially, and by Hazlitt. The wonderful rapidity of action which obtains in this tragedy, the exquisite adaptation of all its parts to form a perfect and consistent

whole, and the inimitable use of violent contrasts which it presents, have been dilated upon by the German with a ripe and critical intelligence—by our countrymen with the eloquence of vehement admiration. Coleridge also has a long essay upon this drama, to which the authority of his name has attached importance. Some of his criticisms, however, appear more subtle than sensible. He discovers that Lady Macbeth's "is the mock fortitude of a mind deluded by ambition. She shames her husband by a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks in the season of remorse, and dies in suicidal agony." He discovers that the scene opens with superstition"; as if Macbeth had dreamt he had seen the Witches. Surely there is a difference between the supernatural and the superstitious! The difference between mere apprehension and sensation, between imagination and apparent existence. The truth of supernatural events may be doubted or denied, but if admitted, to see it as it is, is not superstition. Degrading Lady Macbeth into a fanciful would-be heroine, Coleridge makes her lord a predetermined scoundrel, "rendered temptable (by the Witches) by previous dalliance of the fancy with ambitious thoughts." "His soliloquy shewed the early birth-date of his guilt." According to this view, the temptation of the weird Sisters, and the "concatinating tendency of the imagination," was quite needless. A villain *ab initio*, "who, wishing a temporal end for

itself, does in truth will the means," can find no palliation in the direct tempting of supernatural beings, nor in being subject to the masterdom of another human will. Then Macbeth makes the most grievous metaphysical mistakes. Before the deed, "the inward pangs and warnings of conscience are interpreted into prudential reasonings;" and afterwards, he is "ever and ever mistaking the anguish of conscience for fears of selfishness." The idea conveyed is, that conscience is independent of reason; that the inward monitor intuitively decides upon the right and wrong without the aid of the judgment; that the still small voice is an uninstructed sentiment.

We cannot give our adhesion to the theory that Macbeth was originally a treacherous and bad man, prone to deeds of midnight murder. His bold and fierce wife is likely to have known him far better than his metaphysical critic; and she reading his letter, which describes the prophecies of the weird Sisters, says :

"Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldest be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldest highly,
That wouldest thou holily; wouldest ~~not~~ play false,
And yet wouldest surely win."

Macbeth is introduced as a ~~r~~ t brave man. "Valour's minion," he is called by the bleeding

captain, and "Bellona's bridegroom" by Rosse. "Oh, valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!" exclaims the King, on hearing the relation of his first victory. Twice in one day he is represented to have saved the kingdom, and the gracious Duncan regrets his inadequate power of reward:

"More is thy due than more than all can pay."

He is "full of the milk of human kindness," but withal so personally brave that his deeds against the Irish gallowglasses and the Norwegians are the theme of general enthusiasm, and win for him "good opinions from all sorts of people." Evidently he is a man of sanguine nervous temperament, of large capacity and ready susceptibility. The high energy and courage which guides his sword in the battles of his country are qualities of nerve force which future circumstances will direct to good or evil purposes. Circumstances arise soliciting to evil; "supernatural soliciting," the force of which, in these anti-spiritualist days, it requires an almost unattainable flight of imagination to get a glimpse of. It must be remembered that the drama brings Macbeth face to face with the supernatural, with that devil's brood the weird Sisters, so unlike the inhabitants of earth, who, after a prophecy immediately fulfilled, "made themselves air into which they vanished." What would be the effect upon a man of nervous sensibility, of such appearances? Surely most profound. Well

may Hazlitt say, that "he can conceive no common actor to look like a man who had encountered the weird Sisters." When they had "melted as breath into the wind," even the firm tempered and judicious Banquo exclaims :

"Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?"

We may disbelieve in any manifestations of the supernatural ; but we cannot but believe that were their occurrence possible, they would profoundly affect the mind. Humboldt says, that the effect of the first earthquake shock is most bewildering, upsetting one of the strongest articles of material faith, namely, the fixedness of the earth. Any supernatural appearance must have this effect of shaking the foundations of the mind in an infinitely greater degree. Indeed, we so fully feel that any glimpse into the spirit-world would effect in ourselves a profound mental revulsion, that we readily extend to Macbeth a more indulgent opinion of his great crimes, than we should have been able to do had he been led on to their commission by the temptations of earthly incident alone.

Macbeth is no villain in-grain, like Richard the Third or Iago, revelling in the devil's work because he likes it ; but a once noble human nature, struggling but yielding in a net of temptation, whose meshes are wound around him by the visible hand

of the Spirit of Evil. Slave as he is to that soldier's **passion**, the love of fame and power, he is not without **amiable** qualities. He was once loved even by his **arch-enemy** Macduff, to whom Malcolm says :

“This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest ; you have loved him well.”

And we may even accept the testimony of the Queen **of** Hell, “the close contriver of all harms,” in his **favour**. She upbraids her foul menials, the Sisters, **because** they had been serving one who had **no pleasure** in evil for its own sake, but who had spitefully and wrathfully accepted it only as the means **to** an end :

“And, which is worse, all you have done
Hath been but for a wayward son,
Spiteful and wrathful, who, as others do,
Loves for his own ends, not for you.”

Let it not be thought that we attempt to palliate the **guilt** of Macbeth. In a moral point of view this is **impossible**. If his solicitings to crime are **supernatural**, combined with fate and metaphysic aid, he **is not** blinded by them. With conscience fully awake, **with** eyes open to the foul nature of his double **treachery**, although resisting, he yields to temptation. **He** even feels that he is not called upon to act to **fulfil** the decrees of destiny.

“**If** Chance will have me king, why Chance may crown me
Without my stir.”

he with more determination resisted the tempt-

ations of the woman, he might have falsified the prophecies of the fiend, put aside from his lips the poisoned chalice of remorse, maintained from rancours the vessel of his peace, and rescued the eternal jewel of his soul.

Though here and elsewhere Shakespeare has admitted the doctrine of destiny, no one more pitilessly tore aside this veil from the features for wickedness. Edgar, in Lear, says : “ This is the excellent foppery of the world ! That when we are sick in fortune [often the surfeit of our own behaviour] we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars : as if we were villains on necessity ; fools by heavenly compulsion ; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance ; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by a forced obedience of planetary influence ; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on : an admirable evasion——”

To the Christian moralist, Macbeth’s guilt is so dark that its degree cannot be estimated, as there are no shades in black. But to the mental physiologist, to whom nerve rather than conscience, the function of the brain rather than the power of the will, is an object of study, it is impossible to omit from calculation the influences of the supernatural event, which is not only the starting-point of the action, but the remote cause of the mental phenomena.

The professed moralist is slow to accept the teach-

ing of the drama; but where shall we find a more impressive lesson of the manner in which the infraction of the moral law works out its own punishment, than in the delineation of the agonizing soul torture of Macbeth? In this, as in all other instances, the true psychological is not opposed to the true moral doctrine of human life. In the attempt to trace conduct to its earliest source or motive, and to deduce the laws of emotional progression, the psychological, or to use the stricter and better term, the physiological moralist teaches the importance of establishing an early habit of emotional action, which may tend to virtuous conduct, and form a prepared defence against temptation. By shewing how invariably in the moral world evil leads on to evil, he teaches in the best manner the wisdom of opposing the beginnings of evil, and he develops the ethical principle laid down by our Great Teacher, that an evil emotion is in the heart the living representative of the bad action.

The great interest of this drama is most skilfully made to depend upon the conflicting emotions of sympathy with a man struggling under fearful temptation, horror excited by treachery and foul murder, awful amazement at the visible grasp of the Spirit of Evil upon the human soul, and of satisfied justice at the hell of remorse into which he is plunged. In this respect there is an obvious parallelism between Macbeth and Faust; since in both the hero-criminal of — piece is not responsible as a free agent, so far as

he is but the mortal instrument of the fiend in deeds of evil. The conduct of Faust, however, is not comparable to that of the fierce and bloody Scotch tyrant, and he is saved from our utter disgust and hatred by the more immediate intervention of the fiend in the execution of the murders, both of Margaret's mother and her brother. Had the action not been thus arranged, had Faust himself poisoned the mother and slain the brother, all sympathy with him as a human soul in the hands of fate would have been destroyed by the irrepressible feelings which attach to a base and dastardly criminal.

In Macbeth the fiercer temptation, fanned not only by the evil solicitings of the devil, but by the agency of his dark and terrible human tempter and colleague, renders it possible to commit the perpetration of crimes to his own hand, without destroying those traces of sympathy, without which any deep interest in his fate could not have been invoked.

The temptation of the weird Sisters has an immediate effect on Macbeth. In the presence of others, he soliloquises, and calls upon himself the remark from Banquo:

“Look how our partner’s wrapt.”

The immediate fulfilment of two parts of the prophecy come as “happy prologues to the swelling act,” while murder is thought of as an “horrible imagining,” and an indication that the supernatural soliciting was evil in its nature.

“This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am thine of Cawdor.
It good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not”

Let not this early and important testimony be overlooked, which Macbeth gives to the extreme excitability of his imagination. The supernatural soliciting of the weird Sisters suggests to him an *image*, not a **thought** merely, but an image so horrible that its contemplation

“doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature”

This passage was scarcely intended to describe an **actual** hallucination, but rather that excessive predominance of the imaginative faculty which enables **some** men to call at will before the mind's eye the **very** appearance of the object of thought, that faculty which enabled a great painter to place at will in the **empty** chair of his studio the mental delineation of **any** person who had given him one sitting. It is a **faculty** bordering on a morbid state, and apt to pass the limit, when judgment swallowed in surmise yields

her function, and the imaginary becomes as real to the mind as the true, "and nothing is but what is not." This early indication of Macbeth's tendency to hallucination is most important in the psychological development of his character.

We are not to understand that Macbeth had entertained any idea of his great crime, before the suggestion of it arising from the devil's interview on Forres heath. That he yields to it is only too evident from the passage beginning "Stars hide your fires." That his wife should form the same guilty purpose, upon the mere recital in his letter of the supernatural information he had obtained of that which was in the "coming on of time," proves not that he had suggested it to her, but that she was prone to entertain it on slighter grounds, and that there was between them that unity of thought and desire which is common between man and wife who are much wrapt in each other.

The struggle of Macbeth before he yields to the suggestion is so fierce that horror and pain are forthwith stamped upon his features. His wife exclaims, when he meets her :

"Your face, my thane, is like a book, where men
May read strange matters."

For herself, she hath no faltering ; she hath no need of supernatural appearances to "prick the sides of her intent." Ambition and the desire "of sovereign sway and masterdom" are to her undaunted metal

the all-sufficient motives of the terrible deed which **she** plotted and instigated, and would have perpetrated, had not a touch of filial piety withheld her **hand**. Strange inconsistency of humanity which leaves **not** the darkest moments of the lost soul without **stray** gleams of light.

“ Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done’t ”

This is one of the “ compunctions visitings of nature,” **against** which she invokes the murdering ministers **whose** sightless substances wait on nature’s mischief, **in** that expression of sublimated wickedness in which **she** welcomes the fatal entrance of Duncan under her **battlements**.

The wavering of Macbeth, expressed in his first **soliloquy**, appears to us very different from the “**prudential reasonings**,” which, according to Coleridge, **he** mistakes for conscience. Surely it indicates a **sensitive** appreciation of right motive, and the fear of punishment in the life to come; the acknowledgement also that crime, even in this world, receives its due reward from the operation of even-handed **justice**; the acknowledgment of the foul nature of **treachery** to a kinsman and disloyalty to a king. Moreover, that expression of sincere pity for the **gracious** Duncan, whose meek and holy character is depicted in so fine a contrast to his own fierce and **wayward** passions, is a sentiment far removed from

that he may perchance lead some into a port of safety, or at least that he may assist in refitting the torn and shattered barque. But to stand on one side and calmly contemplate the phenomena of human passion, like the chorus in the old Greek drama, is the lot of few. When the elements of human passion are in fierce strife, there is no near standing-place for the foot of science, like the deck of the great steamer which allowed Scoresby to measure the force and speed of the wild Atlantic wave. The vortex of passion tends to draw in all who float near; and tranquil observation of its turmoil can only be made from a standing-point more or less remote. On all possible occasions, indeed, it behoves the man whose object of study and of care is the human mind, to observe for himself its phenomena, and to test its springs and sources of action; but it behoves him also to accept the testimony of those who have weathered the storm, and gratefully to appreciate any assistance he may obtain from others who contemplate the same phenomena from different points of view to his own: and there is no one from whom he will derive help of such inestimable value, as from the man whose high faculties enable him to contemplate human nature, as it were, from within. The Poet or maker, the same intrinsically with the Seer or gifted observer, is the best guide and helpmate with whom the psychologist can ally himself. He is like the native of a country to whom mountain and stream

and every living thing are known, acting as instructor and guide to the naturalist, whose systems and classifications he may hold in slight esteem, but with whom he has a common love and a more personal knowledge for all their objects. Compared with the assistance which the psychologist derives from the true poet, that which he obtains from the metaphysician is as sketchy and indistinct as the theoretical description of a new country might be, given by one who had never been therein, as the description of Australia might be, drawn from the parallel of its climate and latitude with South America or China.

Above all seers with whom a beneficent Providence has blessed mankind, to delight and instruct them with that knowledge which is so wondrous that it is falsely called intuitive, is that heaven-born genius, who is the pride and glory of this country, the greatest poet of all ages, and preeminently the most truthful analyst of human action. Shakespeare not only possesses more psychological insight than all other poets, but more than all other writers. He has been aptly called "a nature humanized." He has above all men the faculty of unravelling the motives of human action. Compared with his profound knowledge of the surface and depths of the human soul, the information of other great minds, even of such wondrously vigorous intelligences as those of Plato and Bacon, were obscure and fragmentary. Had he not been poet, what might he not have been as a philo-

sopher? What essays might he not have written? What Socratic dialogues, sparkling with wit, seething with humour, saturated with truth, might he not have written upon politics and philosophy? An American writer has lately started the idea that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon! Verily, were it not for the want of power of imagination and verbal euphony which is displayed in Bacon's Essays, one might rather think that they were some of Shakespeare's own rough memoranda on men and motives, which had strayed from his desk.

Although *Macbeth* is less pervaded with the idea of mental disease than its great rival tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Lear*, and contains fewer scenes in which phases of insanity are actually represented, it is not only replete with passages of deep psychological interest, but in the mental development of the bloody-handed hero and of his terrible mate, it affords a study scarcely less instructive than the wild and passionate madness of *Lear*, or the metaphysical motive-weighing melancholy of the Prince of Denmark.

It is not within the scope of our intention to comment upon the artistic perfection of this work. This has already been done, and done well, by professed writers of dramatic criticism—by Schlegel especially, and by Hazlitt. The wonderful rapidity of action which obtains in this tragedy, the exquisite adaptation of all its parts to form a perfect and consistent

whole, and the inimitable use of violent contrasts which it presents, have been dilated upon by the German with a ripe and critical intelligence—by our countrymen with the eloquence of vehement admiration. Coleridge also has a long essay upon this drama, to which the authority of his name has attached importance. Some of his criticisms, however, appear more subtle than sensible. He discovers that Lady Macbeth's "is the mock fortitude of a mind deluded by ambition. She shames her husband by a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks in the season of remorse, and dies in suicidal agony." He discovers that the scene opens "with superstition"; as if Macbeth had dreamt he had seen the Witches. Surely there is a difference between the supernatural and the superstitious! The difference between mere apprehension and sensation, between imagination and apparent existence. The truth of supernatural events may be doubted or denied, but if admitted, to see it as it is, is not superstition. Degrading Lady Macbeth into a fanciful would-be heroine, Coleridge makes her lord a predetermined scoundrel, "rendered temptable (by the Witches) by previous dalliance of the fancy with ambitious thoughts." "His soliloquy shewed the early birth-date of his guilt." According to this view, the temptation of the weird Sisters, and the "concatinating tendency of the imagination," was quite needless. villain *ab initio*, "who, wishing a temporal end for

itself, does in truth will the means," can find no palliation in the direct tempting of supernatural beings, nor in being subject to the masterdom of another human will. Then Macbeth makes the most grievous metaphysical mistakes. Before the deed, "the inward pangs and warnings of conscience are interpreted into prudential reasonings;" and afterwards, he is "ever and ever mistaking the anguish of conscience for fears of selfishness." The idea conveyed is, that conscience is independent of reason; that the inward monitor intuitively decides upon the right and wrong without the aid of the judgment; that the still small voice is an uninstructed sentiment.

We cannot give our adhesion to the theory that Macbeth was originally a treacherous and bad man, prone to deeds of midnight murder. His bold and fierce wife is likely to have known him far better than his metaphysical critic; and she reading his letter, which describes the prophecies of the weird Sisters, says:

"Glamis thou art, and Cawdor; and shalt be
What thou art promised: yet do I fear thy nature;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way: thou wouldest be great;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it: what thou wouldest highly,
That wouldest thou holily; wouldest **not** play false,
And yet wouldest surely win."

Macbeth is introduced as a ~~r~~ t brave man. "Valour's minion," he is called by the bleeding

captain, and "Bellona's bridegroom" by Rosse. "Oh, valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!" exclaims the King, on hearing the relation of his first victory. Twice in one day he is represented to have saved the kingdom, and the gracious Duncan regrets his inadequate power of reward:

"More is thy due than more than all can pay."

He is "full of the milk of human kindness," but withal so personally brave that his deeds against the Irish gallowglasses and the Norwegians are the theme of general enthusiasm, and win for him "good opinions from all sorts of people." Evidently he is a man of sanguine nervous temperament, of large capacity and ready susceptibility. The high energy and courage which guides his sword in the battles of his country are qualities of nerve force which future circumstances will direct to good or evil purposes. Circumstances arise soliciting to evil; "supernatural soliciting," the force of which, in these anti-spiritualist days, it requires an almost unattainable flight of imagination to get a glimpse of. It must be remembered that the drama brings Macbeth face to face with the supernatural, with that devil's brood the weird Sisters, so unlike the inhabitants of earth, who, after a prophecy immediately fulfilled, "made themselves air into which they vanished." What would be the effect upon a man of nervous sensibility, if such appearances? Surely most profound. Well

may Hazlitt say, that "he can conceive no common actor to look like a man who had encountered the weird Sisters." When they had "melted as breath into the wind," even the firm tempered and judicious Banquo exclaims :

"Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?"

We may disbelieve in any manifestations of the supernatural ; but we cannot but believe that were their occurrence possible, they would profoundly affect the mind. Humboldt says, that the effect of the first earthquake shock is most bewildering, upsetting one of the strongest articles of material faith, namely, the fixedness of the earth. Any supernatural appearance must have this effect of shaking the foundations of the mind in an infinitely greater degree. Indeed, we so fully feel that any glimpse into the spirit-world would effect in ourselves a profound mental revulsion, that we readily extend to Macbeth a more indulgent opinion of his great crimes, than we should have been able to do had he been led on to their commission by the temptations of earthly incident alone.

Macbeth is no villain in-grain, like Richard the Third or Iago, revelling in the devil's work because he likes it ; but a once noble human nature, struggling but yielding in a net of temptation, whose meshes are wound around him by the visible hand

of the Spirit of Evil. Slave as he is to that soldier's **passion**, the love of fame and power, he is not without **amiable** qualities. He was once loved even by his **arch-enemy** Macduff, to whom Malcolm says :

“This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest , you have loved him well.”

And we may even accept the testimony of the Queen **of** Hell, “the close contriver of all harms,” in his **favour**. She upbraids her foul menials, the Sisters, **because** they had been serving one who had **no pleasure** in evil for its own sake, but who had spitefully and wrathfully accepted it only as the means **to** an end :

“And, which is worse, all you have done
Hath been but for a wayward son,
Spiteful and wiathful ; who, as others do,
Loves for his own ends, not for you.”

Let it not be thought that we attempt to palliate the **guilt** of Macbeth. In a moral point of view this is **impossible**. If his solicitings to crime are **supernatural**, combined with fate and metaphysic aid, he **is not** blinded by them. With conscience fully awake, **with** eyes open to the foul nature of his double **treachery**, although resisting, he yields to temptation. **He** even feels that he is not called upon to act to **fulfil** the decrees of destiny.

“If Chance will have me king, why Chance may crown me
Without my stir.”

he with more determination resisted the tempt-

ations of the woman, he might have falsified the prophecies of the fiend, put aside from his lips the poisoned chalice of remorse, maintained from rancours the vessel of his peace, and rescued the eternal jewel of his soul.

Though here and elsewhere Shakespeare has admitted the doctrine of destiny, no one more pitilessly tore aside this veil from the features for wickedness. Edgar, in Lear, says : "This is the excellent foppery of the world ! That when we are sick in fortune [often the surfeit of our own behaviour] we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars : as if we were villains on necessity ; fools by heavenly compulsion ; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance ; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by a forced obedience of planetary influence ; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on : an admirable evasion——"

To the Christian moralist, Macbeth's guilt is so dark that its degree cannot be estimated, as there are no shades in black. But to the mental physiologist, to whom nerve rather than conscience, the function of the brain rather than the power of the will, is an object of study, it is impossible to omit from calculation the influences of the supernatural event, which is not only the starting-point of the action, but the remote cause of the mental phenomena.

The professed moralist is slow to accept the teach-

ing of the drama; but where shall we find a more impressive lesson of the manner in which the infraction of the moral law works out its own punishment, than in the delineation of the agonizing soul torture of Macbeth? In this, as in all other instances, the true psychological is not opposed to the true moral doctrine of human life. In the attempt to trace conduct to its earliest source or motive, and to deduce the laws of emotional progression, the psychological, or to use the stricter and better term, the physiological moralist teaches the importance of establishing an early habit of emotional action, which may tend to virtuous conduct, and form a prepared defence against temptation. By shewing how invariably in the moral world evil leads on to evil, he teaches in the best manner the wisdom of opposing the beginnings of evil, and he develops the ethical principle laid down by our Great Teacher, that an evil emotion is in the heart the living representative of the bad action.

The great interest of this drama is most skilfully made to depend upon the conflicting emotions of sympathy with a man struggling under fearful temptation, horror excited by treachery and soul murder, awful amazement at the visible grasp of the Spirit of Evil upon the human soul, and of satisfied justice at the hell of remorse into which he is plunged. In this respect there is an obvious parallelism between Macbeth and Faust; since in both the hero-criminal of piece is not responsible as a free agent, so far as

he is but the mortal instrument of the fiend in deeds of evil. The conduct of Faust, however, is not comparable to that of the fierce and bloody Scotch tyrant, and he is saved from our utter disgust and hatred by the more immediate intervention of the fiend in the execution of the murders, both of Margaret's mother and her brother. Had the action not been thus arranged, had Faust himself poisoned the mother and slain the brother, all sympathy with him as a human soul in the hands of fate would have been destroyed by the irrepressible feelings which attach to a base and dastardly criminal.

In Macbeth the fiercer temptation, fanned not only by the evil solicitings of the devil, but by the agency of his dark and terrible human tempter and colleague, renders it possible to commit the perpetration of crimes to his own hand, without destroying those traces of sympathy, without which any deep interest in his fate could not have been invoked.

The temptation of the weird Sisters has an immediate effect on Macbeth. In the presence of others, he soliloquises, and calls upon himself the remark from Banquo :

“Look how our partner’s wrapt.”

The immediate fulfilment of two parts of the prophecy come as “happy prologues to the swelling act,” while murder is thought of as an “horrible imagining;” and an indication that the supernatural soliciting was evil in its nature.

"This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good : if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor.
It good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings :
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not."

Let not this early and important testimony be overlooked, which Macbeth gives to the extreme excitability of his imagination. The supernatural soliciting of the weird Sisters suggests to him an *image*, not a **thought** merely, but an image so horrible that its **contemplation**

"doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature."

This passage was scarcely intended to describe an **actual** hallucination, but rather that excessive predominance of the imaginative faculty which enables **some** men to call at will before the mind's eye the **very** appearance of the object of thought; that faculty which enabled a great painter to place at will in the **empty** chair of his studio the mental delineation of **any** person who had given him one sitting. It is a **faculty** bordering on a morbid state, and apt to pass the limit, when judgment swallowed in surmise yields

her function, and the imaginary becomes as real to the mind as the true, "and nothing is but what is not." This early indication of Macbeth's tendency to hallucination is most important in the psychological development of his character.

We are not to understand that Macbeth had entertained any idea of his great crime, before the suggestion of it arising from the devil's interview on Forres heath. That he yields to it is only too evident from the passage beginning "Stars hide your fires." That his wife should form the same guilty purpose, upon the mere recital in his letter of the supernatural information he had obtained of that which was in the "coming on of time," proves not that he had suggested it to her, but that she was prone to entertain it on slighter grounds, and that there was between them that unity of thought and desire which is common between man and wife who are much wrapt in each other.

The struggle of Macbeth before he yields to the suggestion is so fierce that horror and pain are forthwith stamped upon his features. His wife exclaims, when he meets her :

"Your face, my thane, is like a book, where men
May read strange matters."

For herself, she hath no faltering ; she hath no need of supernatural appearances to "prick the sides of her intent." Ambition and the desire "of sovereign sway and masterdom" are to her undaunted metal

the all-sufficient motives of the terrible deed which she plotted and instigated, and would have perpetrated, had not a touch of filial piety withheld her hand. Strange inconsistency of humanity which leaves not the darkest moments of the lost soul without ~~stray~~ gleams of light.

"Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done't"

This is one of the "compunctionous visitings of nature," against which she invokes the murdering ministers whose sightless substances wait on nature's mischief, in that expression of sublimated wickedness in which she welcomes the fatal entrance of Duncan under her battlements.

The wavering of Macbeth, expressed in his first soliloquy, appears to us very different from the "prudential reasonings," which, according to Coleridge, he mistakes for conscience. Surely it indicates a sensitive appreciation of right motive, and the fear of punishment in the life to come; the acknowledgment also that crime, even in this world, receives its due reward from the operation of even-handed justice; the acknowledgment of the foul nature of treachery to a kinsman and disloyalty to a king. Moreover, that expression of sincere pity for the gracious Duncan, whose meek and holy character is depicted in so fine a contrast to his own fierce andoward passions, is a sentiment far removed from

ntial reasonings.” Thus he convinces himself the deed, and concludes :

“ I have no spur
’o prick the sides of my intent, but only
’aulting ambition, which o’erleaps its’sell,
and falls on the other.”

Lady Macbeth joins him, he expresses his resolve, and for the first time adds “ pru-reasonings”:

will proceed no further in this business :
hath honour’d me of late ; and I have bought
den opinions from all sorts of people,
ich would be worn now in their newest gloss,
cast aside so soon.”

ark the temptation to which the terrible wo-
objects him ; the taunts of cowardice and weak-
aunts to which a soldier gifted with sensitive
l bravery would be keenly alive, especially
from the lips of a beautiful woman whom he

“ Was the hope drunk
erein you dress’d yourself? hath it slept since ?
I wakes it now, to look so green and pale
what it did so freely? From this time
h I account thy love. Art thou afear'd
be the same in thine own act and valour
thou art in desire ?”

she urges the temptation by comparing his
ng desire with her own fell purpose, in that
passage :

“ I have given suck, and know
w tender ’tis to love the babe that milks me :

d, while it was smiling in my face,
pluck'd the nipple from his boneless gums,
ash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
done to this."

that his better nature would relent, she had
to the treacherous and bloody deed. She
by shewing clearly the opportunity. She
the two chamberlains with wine and wassail,

"Memory, the warder of the brain,
will be a fume, and the receipt of reason
imbeck only : when in swinish sleep
eir drenched natures lie as in a death—"

/ Macbeth exclaim in astonishment :

" Bring forth men-children only ;
r thy undaunted mettle should compose
thing but males."

under the fierce battery of temptation, and
has thus poured her spirits into his ear, and
his compunctions with the valour of her
he falls, without time for further thought,
into the commission of his first great crime.

"I am settled, and bend up
corporal agent to this terrible feat.
y, and mock the time with fairest show :
e face must hide what the false heart doth know."
urliest time, the temptation was urged by the

Woman, infinitely the most virtuous, dis-
sider partner when she has once entered the
f crime.

"Denn, geht es zu des Bösen Haus,
Das Weib hat tausend Schritt voraus."

“prudential reasonings.” Thus he convinces himself against the deed, and concludes :

“ I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps its' sell,
And falls on the other.”

When Lady Macbeth joins him, he expresses his virtuous resolve, and for the first time adds “prudential reasonings”:

“ We will proceed no further in this business :
He hath honour'd me of late ; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.”

Then mark the temptation to which the terrible woman subjects him ; the taunts of cowardice and weakness ; taunts to which a soldier gifted with sensitive personal bravery would be keenly alive, especially coming from the lips of a beautiful woman whom he loved :

“ Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? hath it slept since ?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afeard
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?”

Further she urges the temptation by comparing his vacillating desire with her own fell purpose, in that terrible passage :

“ I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me :

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd the nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this."

Fearing that his better nature would relent, she had sworn him to the treacherous and bloody deed. She concludes by shewing clearly the opportunity. She will ply the two chamberlains with wine and wassail, until

"Memory, the warder of the brain,
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
 A limbeck only : when in swinish sleep
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death—"

Well may Macbeth exclaim in astonishment :

"Bring forth men-children only ;
 For thy undaunted mettle should compose
 Nothing but males."

He reels under the fierce battery of temptation, and when she has thus poured her spirits into his ear, and chastised his compunctions with the valour of her tongue, he falls, without time for further thought, rushing into the commission of his first great crime.

"I am settled, and bend up
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
 Away, and mock the time with fairest show :
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know."

As in earliest time, the temptation was urged by the woman. Woman, infinitely the most virtuous, distances her partner when she has once entered the career of crime.

"Denn, geht es zu des Bösen Haus,
 Das Weib hat tausend Schritt voraus."

The dagger scene is an illustration of Shakespeare's finest psychological insight. An hallucination of sight resulting from the high-wrought nervous tension of the regicide, and "the present horror of the time," and typifying in form the dread purpose of his mind is impressed upon his senses, but rejected by his judgment is recognised as a morbid product of mental excitement, and finally its existence altogether repudiated, and the bloody business of the mind made answerable for the foolery of the senses.

"Is this a dagger which I see before me,
 The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.
 I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
 Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
 To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
 A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
 Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
 I see thee yet, in form as palpable
 As this which now I draw.
 Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
 And such an instrument I was to use.
 Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
 Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
 And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
 Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
 It is the bloody business which informs
 Thus to mine eyes."

The deed is done! and the terrible punishment of guilt commences from the very moment. Remorse dogs the murderer's heels even from the chamber of death.

"*Macb.* One cried *God bless us!* and *Amen* the other;

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
 Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
 When they did say 'God bless us !'

Lady M. Consider it not so deeply.

Macb. But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
 I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
 Stuck in my throat.

Lady M. These deeds must not be thought
 After these ways ; so, *it will make us mad.*"

Guilt hath instantly changed the brave man into a
 coward.

"I am afraid to think what I have done ;
 Look on't again I dare not."

"How is't with me, when every noise appals me?"

The sting of remorse extorts from him the direct
 expression of regret :

"To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself."
 "Wake Duncan with thy knocking ! *Would thou could'st!*"

Compare this with the woman's firmer nerve, rebuking
 him :

"You do unbend your noble strength, to think
So brainsickly of things."

"Infirm of purpose !
 Give me the daggers : the sleeping and the dead
 Are but as pictures : 'tis the eye of childhood
 That fears a painted devil."

She enters the murder chamber, to do that which her
 mate dare not do, and shewing her hands, gilded like
 the faces of the grooms with Duncan's blood, says :

"My hands are of your colour ; but I shame
 To wear a heart so white."

And this is the lady whom Mr. Coleridge describes as courageous in fancy only !

The passage, “ Methought I heard a voice,” &c., is scarcely to be accepted as another instance of hallucination, an hallucination of hearing parallel to that of sight in the appearance of the dagger. It is rather an instance of merely excited imagination without sensual representation, like the “ suggestion whose horrid image” is spoken of on Forres heath. The word “ *methought* ” is sufficient to distinguish this voice of the fancy from an hallucination of sense. The lengthened reasoning of the fancied speech is also unlike an hallucination of hearing ; real hallucinations of hearing being almost always restricted to two or three words, or at furthest, to brief sentences. How exquisite is this description of sleep ! How correct, psychologically, is the threat that remorse will murder sleep ! How true the prediction to the course of the drama, in which we find that hereafter the murderer did “ lack the season of all natures, sleep ! ”

“ *Macb.* Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more !*
Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

Lady M. What do you mean ?

Macb. Still it cried *Sleep no more !* to all the house :
Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more ; Macbeth shall sleep no more.”

When the first agony of remorseful excitement has

passed, its more settled phase is expressed in the life-weary, Hamlet-like melancholy of the passage :

“ Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time ; for, from this instant,
There’s nothing serious in mortality :
All is but toys : renown and grace is dead ;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.”

The description of the night of murder is conceived to add to the supernatural. By lamentings in the air, earthquake, eclipse, prodigies in animal life, things “unnatural, even like the deed that’s done,” the mental effect of awe is skilfully produced, and the feeling of Macbeth’s balance between fate and free-will is maintained just at that point which enables us both to sympathize and condemn.

Macbeth at last hath obtained the “ All hail hereafter;” but the furies of conscience rack his soul with cowardly and anxious thoughts. He is cowed by the presence of a brave and honest man, his old friend and colleague, whose royalty of nature, dauntless temper, and the prudence with which he acts, make him an object of fear, and his presence a rebuke. Jealousy, moreover, of the greatness which the weird Sisters had promised to the issue of Banquo, rankles in his mind, now debased by guilt and the fertile seed-ground of all evil passion.

“ For Banquo’s issue have I filed my mind ;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder’d ;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace

Only for them ; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings !
Rather than so, come fate into the list,
And champion me to the utterance !”

Strange inconsistency ! He yields to Fate when its decrees jump with his own desires ; but when the tide turns he resolves to breast its irresistible wave. One is inclined, however, to the belief, that the first reason assigned for Banquo's death was the most potent, that “there is none but he whose being I do fear.” Macbeth had no children, and the descent of the crown could not touch his feelings or interests. When he learns that Fleance has escaped, he feels “bound in to saucy doubts and fears ;” but, on the whole, he treats the escape as a light matter, and as the cause of future danger to himself, rather than of anxiety respecting the succession.

How awful is the retribution which the Nemesis of conscience works upon the guilty pair ; and that before they have cause to dread any earthly retribution. Duncan's sons are fugitives in foreign lands. The peers gather freely round the court of the new king. Suspicions have indeed arisen in the mind of Banquo, but he breathes them only to himself, and commends his indissoluble duties to the king. All without seems fair ; but within ? Listen to the deep sound of melancholy surging from the heart of the imperious woman :

“ Nought's had, all's spent,

Where our desire is got without content :
"Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy."

From these sad lonely thoughts she rouses herself to chide her lord for permitting similar thoughts to be expressed legibly on his more sensitive organization.

"*Lady M.* How now, my lord ! why do you keep alone,
Of sörriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on ? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard : what's done is done.

Macbeth. We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it :
She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly : better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy."

Well might she feel it needful to urge upon him the policy of sleeking o'er his rugged looks, and of being bright and jovial among his guests ; but how deep the agony of the reply :

"O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife !"

The banquet scene following the murder of Banquo is unrivalled in dramatic force and psychological truth. The kingly host hath put on a forced cheerfulness. He will play the humble host, and sit in the midst. He commands his guests to be large in mirth. He has something like a grim jest for the murderer

who appears at the side door, to whom he makes the only play on words in the tragedy, the porter's ribaldry excepted.

"*Macbeth.* There's blood upon thy face.

Murderer. 'Tis Banquo's then.

Macb. 'Tis better thee *without* than he *within*."

"Thou art the best o' the cut-throats : yet he's good
That did the like for Fleance : if thou didst it,
Thou art the *nonpareil*."

The short-lived effort to be gay subsides into the usual abstracted mood, and Lady Macbeth needs to chide him: "You do not give the cheer," &c. He makes an effort, giving that physiological grace before meat :

"Now good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both!"

He playfully challenges the absence of Banquo as an act of unkindness, thus by a voluntary mental act calling before his mind's eye the image of the murdered man. When invited to sit, "The table's full." He says—"Here's a place reserved, sir."—"Where? which of you have done this?" None see the shadowy form except Macbeth himself, and his first impression is that it is a sorry jest; but how quickly does he believe in the supernatural nature of his visitor: "Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me." He looks "on that which might appal the devil," but which no eyes but his own can see. Although "quite unmann'd in folly," fear turns to daring, and he threatens the ghost:

"Prithee, see there ! behold ! look ! lo ! how say you ?
Why, what care I ? If thou canst nod, speak too.
If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites."

The hallucination fades, and his natural high courage allows him on the moment to philosophize upon the appearance :

"Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time,
Ere human statute purged the gentle weal ;
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd
Too terrible for the ear : the times have been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end ; but now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools : this is more strange
Than such a murder is."

Again roused from reverie by his wife, he excuses his behaviour by the same reference to a customary infirmity, which is twice alluded to for the same purpose by his wife :

"I do forget.
Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends ;
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing
To those that know me."

He proposes a bumper health to the general joy of the whole table, and to that in particular of "our dear friend Banquo," this second reference shewing how his mind is fascinated with the idea of the dead man, and having the immediate effect of re-establishing the hallucination. Then comes that burst of despairing

defiance, when the extremity of fear changes to audacity :

“Avaunt ! and quit my sight ! let the earth hide thee !
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold ;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with !”

“What man dare, I dare :
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm’d rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger ;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble : or be alive again,
And dare me to the desert with thy sword ;
If trembling I exhibit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow !
Unreal mockery, hence !—Why, so : being gone,
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.”

He is astonished that the others present are not moved by the object of his dread. Unlike the air-drawn dagger, which he recognised as an hallucination, he believes this appearance to have been most real. He does this notwithstanding his wife’s assurance that—

“This is the very painting of your fear :
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,
Led you to Duncan.”

She gives no credence to matters which

“Would well become
A woman’s story at a winter’s fire,
Authorized by her grandam.”

She taunts him, and assures him :

“Why do you make such faces ? When all’s done,
You look but on a stool.”

It is markworthy that the ghost of Banquo is seen to no one but Macbeth, differing in this respect from that of Hamlet's father. Moreover, Banquo's ghost is silent: Hamlet's ghost is a conversational being, subject to disappearance at cock-crow and other ghost laws; points indicating the poct's intention to represent the ghost of Banquo as an hallucination, not as an apparition, a creation of the heat-oppressed brain, not a shadowy messenger from spirit-land. It is the pathological Nemesis of guilt, not a spiritual existence returned to the confines of the day actively to assist in the discovery of guilt. The progress of the morbid action is depicted with exquisite skill. First, there is the horrible picture of the imagination not transferred to the sense, then there is the sensual hallucination whose reality is questioned and rejected, and now there is the sensual hallucination whose reality is fully accepted.

Are we to accept the repeated assurance, both from Macbeth and from his wife, that he is subject to sudden fits of mental bereavement? or was it a ready lie, coined on the spur of the moment, as an excuse for his strange behaviour?

“Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;
The fit is momentary; upon a thought
He will again be well: if much you note him,
You shall offend him, and extend his passion.”

And again:

“Think of this, good peers,

THE
MAD FOLK
SHAKESPEARE.

PSYCHOLOGICAL ESSAYS

REFERENCE

BY

JOHN CHARLES BUCKNILL, M.D., F.R.S.,
FELLOW OF THE ROYAL COLLEGE OF PHYSICIANS.

SECOND EDITION, REVISED

LONDON AND CAMBRIDGE:
MACMILLAN AND CO.

1867.

Cambridge :
PRINTED BY JONATHAN PALMER.

REFERENCE

TO

Augustus Stowey, Esquire,

OF

KENBURY, NEAR EXETER,

THIS WORK

IS DEDICATED AS A MARK OF SINCERE REGARD,

AND IN REMEMBRANCE

OF MANY YEARS OF KINDLY INTERCOURSE,

BY HIS FRIEND AND NEIGHBOUR,

THE AUTHOR.



PREFACE.

THE shoemaker, who criticised the work of the great painter of antiquity, was listened to with respect, so long as he confined his observations within the limits of his own practical knowledge. If in the following Essays the author has ventured to submit the works of another great master of art to the test of comparison with the special knowledge of a workman, he trusts that his opinions may receive that consideration to which a long and extensive experience of the irregular phenomena of mind may appear fairly to entitle them. As the shoemaker doubtless found it a more easy and agreeable occupation to criticise painted sandals than to make leather ones, so the author of these Essays has found the study of his own science, as it is represented in the works of the immortal dramatist, a delightful recreation from the labours of his practice. If he could by any charm transfer to his readers but a small portion of the pleasure which he has enjoyed

in writing the following pages, he would need to make no apology for their publication, nor entertain any fear of their favourable reception. To have the mind diverted from the routine of professional work, or of professional study, is both wholesome and enjoyable, not for the reason that Lord Bacon gives for physicians so frequently becoming antiquaries, poets, humourists, etc., namely, because “they find that mediocrity and excellence in their own art maketh no difference in profit or reputation;” but because change in the habitual subject and mode of thought is a source of mental recreation and delight. These pages have, indeed, been written in the leisure hours of a busy life; and although the constant care of six hundred insane persons has afforded ample opportunities of comparing the delineations of the psychological artist with the hard realities of existence, it has also denied that leisure which would have enabled the writer to have expressed his opinions in a form and manner more satisfactory to his judgment, and more worthy of the subject. Under these circumstances they have necessarily been written in some haste, and have been sent to the printer with the ink yet wet: they have also been written in the country, so that neither their matter or manner could be submitted to friendly advice. The author tenders these explanations in excuse for imperfections of literary execution, which,

he trusts, may in some measure be atoned for by other qualities in the work, which comes fresh from the field of observation. He claims, indeed, that indulgence which would readily be accorded to a writer whom the active business of life had led into some region of classic interest, and who, taking his ease at his inn, should each evening compare the descriptions of an ancient historian with the scenes he had just beheld during the burden and heat of the day ; the fresh and immediate nature of his knowledge would justify him in assuming a certain kind of authority, without at each step establishing the grounds of his judgment. The author, however, has endeavoured to bear in mind that he was writing, not upon the subject of his own knowledge, but upon that of Shakespeare's ; and although it would have been easy to have supported and illustrated his opinions by the details of observation and the statement of cases, he has abstained from doing so, preferring sometimes to be dogmatic rather than tedious.

Although for many years the dramas of Shakespeare have been familiar to the author, the extent and exactness of the psychological knowledge displayed in them, which a more diligent examination has made known, have surprised and astonished him. He can only account for it on one supposition, namely, that abnormal conditions of mind had at-

tracted Shakespeare's diligent observation, and had been a favourite study. There is no reason to suppose that when Shakespeare wrote, any other asylum for the insane existed in this country than the then poor and small establishment of Bethlem Hospital, the property of which had been taken from the monks by Henry the Eighth, and presented to the city of London for conversion into an asylum, only seventeen years before the poet's birth. In his time the insane members of society were not secluded from the world as they are now. If their symptoms were prominent and dangerous, they were, indeed, thrust out of sight very harshly and effectually ; but if their liberty was in any degree tolerable, it was tolerated, and they were permitted to live in the family circle, or to wander the country. Thus every one must have been brought into immediate contact with examples of every variety of mental derangement ; and any one who sought the knowledge of their peculiarities would find it at every turn. Opportunities of crude observation would, therefore, be ample ; it only required the alembic of a great mind to convert them into psychological science.

Shakespeare's peculiar capacity for effecting such conversion would consist in his intimate knowledge of the normal state of the mental functions in every variety of character, with which he would be able to

compare and estimate every direction and degree of aberration. His knowledge of the mental physiology of human life would be brought to bear upon all the obscurities and intricacies of its pathology. To this power would be added that indefinable possession of genius, call it spiritual tact or insight, or whatever other term may suggest itself, by which the great lords of mind estimate all phases of mind with little aid from reflected light. The peculiarities of a certain character being observed, the great mind which contains all possibilities within itself, imagines the act of mental transmigration, and combining the knowledge of others with the knowledge of self, every variety of character possible in nature becomes possible in conception and delineation.

That abnormal states of mind were a favourite study of Shakespeare would be evident from the mere number of characters to which he has attributed them, and the extent alone to which he has written on the subject. On no other subject, except love and ambition, the blood and chyle of dramatic poetry, has he written so much. On no other has he written with such mighty power.

Some explanation seems due of the title chosen for this work. Since psychology strictly implies all that relates to the soul or mind of man in contradistinction to his material nature, the character of Othello

might have been placed under this title with as much propriety as that of Lear. The derivation and original use of a term, however, not unfrequently differ from its acquired and permanent use, and the term psychology has, of late years, been used to denote all that relates to the department of science which takes cognizance of irregularities and aberrations and diseases of the mind. It serves not to object that the derivation of the word is opposed to such employment, for the same may be said of half the words in the language. Mental pathology would be a far more exact, but also a more cumbrous term ; and no further apology need be made for the modern use of the shorter term, than that no other suits the purpose to which it is applied with equal convenience. One chooses words, like servants, for their usefulness and not for their pedigree.

The author had intended to append to the following pages a chapter on Shakespeare's knowledge of medicine. When, however, it was partly written, he found that the freedom of expression which the great dramatist had permitted himself on medical subjects was such as would either have prevented the admission and consideration of important passages, or have forbidden the present work to many readers, whom it is hoped may otherwise honour it with a perusal. The inconvenience therefore of a separate publication has been preferred.

It only remains to add that three of the following essays have already appeared in the pages of the "Quarterly Journal of Mental Science," a publication edited by the author.

EXMINSTER,

May 12th, 1859.



CONTENTS.

	Page
MACBETH	I
HAMLET	48
OPHELIA	144
KING LEAR	160
TIMON OF ATHENS	236
CONSTANCE	268
THE MELANCHOLY JAQUES	292
MALVOLIO. CHRISTOPHER SLY. COMEDY OF ERRORS	314



PSYCHOLOGICAL ESSAYS.

MACBETH.

MACBETH, the most awful creation of the poetic mind, is a study every way worthy of those to whom the storms of passion present the frequent cause of mental disease. The historian studies the temper of the mind in its most ardent heats, that he may gain a clue to the causation of human events ; the statesman, that he may obtain foreknowledge of tendencies to human action ; and the psychologist, for the more beneficent purpose of acquiring that knowledge as the means of alleviating the most terrible of calamities, and of doing that which the terrified physician in this tragedy dared not attempt, of “ ministering to the mind diseased.” The philosopher studies the laws of storms, that he may teach the mariner to avoid the destructive circle of their influence ; and the physician, whose noble object of study is the human mind, seizes every opportunity of making himself acquainted with the direction and events of its hurricane movements,

that he may perchance lead some into a port of safety, or at least that he may assist in refitting the torn and shattered barque. But to stand on one side and calmly contemplate the phenomena of human passion, like the chorus in the old Greek drama, is the lot of few. When the elements of human passion are in fierce strife, there is no near standing-place for the foot of science, like the deck of the great steamer which allowed Scoresby to measure the force and speed of the wild Atlantic wave. The vortex of passion tends to draw in all who float near; and tranquil observation of its turmoil can only be made from a standing-point more or less remote. On all possible occasions, indeed, it behoves the man whose object of study and of care is the human mind, to observe for himself its phenomena, and to test its springs and sources of action; but it behoves him also to accept the testimony of those who have weathered the storm, and gratefully to appreciate any assistance he may obtain from others who contemplate the same phenomena from different points of view to his own: and there is no one from whom he will derive help of such inestimable value, as from the man whose high faculties enable him to contemplate human nature, as it were, from within. The Poet or maker, the same intrinsically with the Seer or gifted observer, is the best guide and helpmate with whom the psychologist can ally himself. He is like the native of a country to whom mountain and stream

and every living thing are known, acting as instructor and guide to the naturalist, whose systems and classifications he may hold in slight esteem, but with whom he has a common love and a more personal knowledge for all their objects. Compared with the assistance which the psychologist derives from the true poet, that which he obtains from the metaphysician is as sketchy and indistinct as the theoretical description of a new country might be, given by one who had never been therein, as the description of Australia might be, drawn from the parallel of its climate and latitude with South America or China.

Above all seers with whom a beneficent Providence has blessed mankind, to delight and instruct them with that knowledge which is so wondrous that it is falsely called intuitive, is that heaven-born genius, who is the pride and glory of this country, the greatest poet of all ages, and preeminently the most truthful analyst of human action. Shakespeare not only possesses more psychological insight than all other poets, but more than all other writers. He has been aptly called "a nature humanized." He has above all men the faculty of unravelling the motives of human action. Compared with his profound knowledge of the surface and depths of the human soul, the information of other great minds, even of such wondrously vigorous intelligences as those of Plato and Bacon, were obscure and fragmentary. Had he not been a poet, what might he not have been as a philo-

sopher? What essays might he not have written? What Socratic dialogues, sparkling with wit, seething with humour, saturated with truth, might he not have written upon politics and philosophy? An American writer has lately started the idea that Shakespeare's plays were written by Bacon! Verily, were it not for the want of power of imagination and verbal euphony which is displayed in Bacon's Essays, one might rather think that they were some of Shakespeare's own rough memoranda on men and motives, which had strayed from his desk.

Although *Macbeth* is less pervaded with the idea of mental disease than its great rival tragedies of *Hamlet* and *Lear*, and contains fewer scenes in which phases of insanity are actually represented, it is not only replete with passages of deep psychological interest, but in the mental development of the bloody-handed hero and of his terrible mate, it affords a study scarcely less instructive than the wild and passionate madness of *Lear*, or the metaphysical motive-weighing melancholy of the Prince of Denmark.

It is not within the scope of our intention to comment upon the artistic perfection of this work. This has already been done, and done well, by professed writers of dramatic criticism—by Schlegel especially, and by Hazlitt. The wonderful rapidity of action which obtains in this tragedy, the exquisite adaptation of all its parts to form a perfect and consistent

whole, and the inimitable use of violent contrasts which it presents, have been dilated upon by the German with a ripe and critical intelligence—by our countrymen with the eloquence of vehement admiration. Coleridge also has a long essay upon this drama, to which the authority of his name has attached importance. Some of his criticisms, however, appear more subtle than sensible. He discovers that Lady Macbeth's "is the mock fortitude of a mind deluded by ambition. She shames her husband by a superhuman audacity of fancy which she cannot support, but sinks in the season of remorse, and dies in suicidal agony." He discovers that the scene opens "with superstition"; as if Macbeth had dreamt he had seen the Witches. Surely there is a difference between the supernatural and the superstitious! The difference between mere apprehension and sensation, between imagination and apparent existence. The truth of supernatural events may be doubted or denied, but if admitted, to see it as it is, is not superstition. Degrading Lady Macbeth into a fanciful would-be heroine, Coleridge makes her lord a pre-determined scoundrel, "rendered temptable (by the Witches) by previous dalliance of the fancy with ambitious thoughts." "His soliloquy shewed the early birth-date of his guilt." According to this view, the temptation of the weird Sisters, and the "concatinating tendency of the imagination," was quite needless. A villain *ab initio*, "who, wishing a temporal end for

itself, does in truth will the means," can find no palliation in the direct tempting of supernatural beings, nor in being subject to the masterdom of another human will. Then Macbeth makes the most grievous metaphysical mistakes. Before the deed, "the inward pangs and warnings of conscience are interpreted into prudential reasonings;" and afterwards, he is "ever and ever mistaking the anguish of conscience for fears of selfishness." The idea conveyed is, that conscience is independent of reason ; that the inward monitor intuitively decides upon the right and wrong without the aid of the judgment ; that the still small voice is an uninstructed sentiment.

We cannot give our adhesion to the theory that Macbeth was originally a treacherous and bad man, prone to deeds of midnight murder. His bold and fierce wife is likely to have known him far better than his metaphysical critic ; and she reading his letter, which describes the prophecies of the weird Sisters, says :

"Glamis thou art, and Cawdor ; and shalt be
What thou art promised : yet do I fear thy nature ;
It is too full o' the milk of human kindness
To catch the nearest way : thou wouldest be great ;
Art not without ambition, but without
The illness should attend it : what thou wouldest highly,
That wouldest thou holily ; wouldest ~~not~~ play false,
And yet wouldest surely win."

Macbeth is introduced as a ~~r~~ t brave man. ("Valour's minion," he is called by the bleeding

captain, and "Bellona's bridegroom" by Rosse. "Oh, valiant cousin! worthy gentleman!" exclaims the King, on hearing the relation of his first victory. Twice in one day he is represented to have saved the kingdom, and the gracious Duncan regrets his inadequate power of reward :

"More is thy due than more than all can pay."

He is "full of the milk of human kindness," but withal so personally brave that his deeds against the Irish gallowglasses and the Norwegians are the theme of general enthusiasm, and win for him "~~good~~ opinions from all sorts of people." Evidently he is a man of sanguine nervous temperament, of large capacity and ready susceptibility. The high energy and courage which guides his sword in the battles of his country are qualities of nerve force which future circumstances will direct to good or evil purposes. Circumstances arise soliciting to evil; "supernatural soliciting," the force of which, in these anti-spiritualist days, it requires an almost unattainable flight of imagination to get a glimpse of. It must be remembered that the drama brings Macbeth face to face with the supernatural, with that devil's brood the weird Sisters, so unlike the inhabitants of earth, who, after a prophecy immediately fulfilled, "made themselves air into which they vanished." What would be the effect upon a man of nervous sensibility, of such appearances? Surely most profound. Well

may Hazlitt say, that "he can conceive no common actor to look like a man who had encountered the weird Sisters." When they had "melted as breath into the wind," even the firm tempered and judicious Banquo exclaims :

"Were such things here as we do speak about?
Or have we eaten of the insane root
That takes the reason prisoner?"

We may disbelieve in any manifestations of the supernatural ; but we cannot but believe that were their occurrence possible, they would profoundly affect the mind. Humboldt says, that the effect of the first earthquake shock is most bewildering, upsetting one of the strongest articles of material faith, namely, the fixedness of the earth. Any supernatural appearance must have this effect of shaking the foundations of the mind in an infinitely greater degree. Indeed, we so fully feel that any glimpse into the spirit-world would effect in ourselves a profound mental revulsion, that we readily extend to Macbeth a more indulgent opinion of his great crimes, than we should have been able to do had he been led on to their commission by the temptations of earthly incident alone.

Macbeth is no villain in-grain, like Richard the Third or Iago, revelling in the devil's work because he likes it ; but a once noble human nature, struggling but yielding in a net of temptation, whose meshes are wound around him by the visible hand

of the Spirit of Evil. Slave as he is to that soldier's passion, the love of fame and power, he is not without amiable qualities. He was once loved even by his arch-enemy Macduff, to whom Malcolm says :

“This tyrant, whose sole name blisters our tongues,
Was once thought honest ; you have loved him well.”

And we may even accept the testimony of the Queen of Hell, “the close contriver of all harms,” in his favour. She upbraids her foul menials, the Sisters, because they had been serving one who had no pleasure in evil for its own sake, but who had spitefully and wrathfully accepted it only as the means to an end :

“And, which is worse, all you have done
Hath been but for a wayward son,
Spiteful and wrathful ; who, as others do,
Loves for his own ends, not for you.”

Let it not be thought that we attempt to palliate the guilt of Macbeth. In a moral point of view this is impossible. If his solicitings to crime are supernatural, combined with fate and metaphysic aid, he is not blinded by them. With conscience fully awake, with eyes open to the foul nature of his double treachery, although resisting, he yields to temptation. He even feels that he is not called upon to act to fulfil the decrees of destiny.

“If Chance will have me king, why Chance may crown me
Without my stir.”

Had he with more determination resisted the tempt-

ations of the woman, he might have falsified the prophecies of the fiend, put aside from his lips the poisoned chalice of remorse, maintained from rancours the vessel of his peace, and rescued the eternal jewel of his soul.

Though here and elsewhere Shakespeare has admitted the doctrine of destiny, no one more pitilessly tore aside this veil from the features for wickedness. Edgar, in Lear, says : “ This is the excellent foppery of the world ! That when we are sick in fortune [often the surfeit of our own behaviour] we make guilty of our disasters, the sun, the moon, and the stars : as if we were villains on necessity ; fools by heavenly compulsion ; knaves, thieves, and treachers by spherical predominance ; drunkards, liars, and adulterers, by a forced obedience of planetary influence ; and all that we are evil in by a divine thrusting on : an admirable evasion——”

To the Christian moralist, Macbeth’s guilt is so dark that its degree cannot be estimated, as there are no shades in black. But to the mental physiologist, to whom nerve rather than conscience, the function of the brain rather than the power of the will, is an object of study, it is impossible to omit from calculation the influences of the supernatural event, which is not only the starting-point of the action, but the remote cause of the mental phenomena.

The professed moralist is slow to accept the teach-

ing of the drama; but where shall we find a more impressive lesson of the manner in which the infraction of the moral law works out its own punishment, than in the delineation of the agonizing soul torture of Macbeth? In this, as in all other instances, the true psychological is not opposed to the true moral doctrine of human life. In the attempt to trace conduct to its earliest source or motive, and to deduce the laws of emotional progression, the psychological, or to use the stricter and better term, the physiological moralist teaches the importance of establishing an early habit of emotional action, which may tend to virtuous conduct, and form a prepared defence against temptation. By shewing how invariably in the moral world evil leads on to evil, he teaches in the best manner the wisdom of opposing the beginnings of evil, and he develops the ethical principle laid down by our Great Teacher, that an evil emotion is in the heart the living representative of the bad action.

The great interest of this drama is most skilfully made to depend upon the conflicting emotions of sympathy with a man struggling under fearful temptation, horror excited by treachery and soul murder, awful amazement at the visible grasp of the Spirit of Evil upon the human soul, and of satisfied justice at the hell of remorse into which he is plunged. In this respect there is an obvious parallelism between Macbeth and Faust; since in both the hero-criminal of the piece is not responsible as a free agent, so far as

he is but the mortal instrument of the fiend in deeds of evil. The conduct of Faust, however, is not comparable to that of the fierce and bloody Scotch tyrant, and he is saved from our utter disgust and hatred by the more immediate intervention of the fiend in the execution of the murders, both of Margaret's mother and her brother. Had the action not been thus arranged, had Faust himself poisoned the mother and slain the brother, all sympathy with him as a human soul in the hands of fate would have been destroyed by the irrepressible feelings which attach to a base and dastardly criminal.

In Macbeth the fiercer temptation, fanned not only by the evil solicitings of the devil, but by the agency of his dark and terrible human tempter and colleague, renders it possible to commit the perpetration of crimes to his own hand, without destroying those traces of sympathy, without which any deep interest in his fate could not have been invoked.

The temptation of the weird Sisters has an immediate effect on Macbeth. In the presence of others, he soliloquises, and calls upon himself the remark from Banquo:

“Look how our partner's wrapt.”

The immediate fulfilment of two parts of the prophecy come as “happy prologues to the swelling act,” while murder is thought of as an “horrible imagining,” and an indication that the supernatural soliciting was evil in its nature.

“This supernatural soliciting
Cannot be ill, cannot be good : if ill,
Why hath it given me earnest of success,
Commencing in a truth? I am thane of Cawdor :
If good, why do I yield to that suggestion
Whose horrid image doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature? Present fears
Are less than horrible imaginings :
My thought, whose murder yet is but fantastical,
Shakes so my single state of man, that function
Is smother'd in surmise, and nothing is
But what is not.”

Let not this early and important testimony be overlooked, which Macbeth gives to the extreme excitability of his imagination. The supernatural soliciting of the weird Sisters suggests to him an *image*, not a thought merely, but an image so horrible that its contemplation

“doth unfix my hair
And make my seated heart knock at my ribs,
Against the use of nature.”

This passage was scarcely intended to describe an actual hallucination, but rather that excessive predominance of the imaginative faculty which enables some men to call at will before the mind's eye the very appearance of the object of thought; that faculty which enabled a great painter to place at will in the empty chair of his studio the mental delineation of any person who had given him one sitting. It is a faculty bordering on a morbid state, and apt to pass the limit, when judgment swallowed in surmise yields

her function, and the imaginary becomes as real to the mind as the true, "and nothing is but what is not." This early indication of Macbeth's tendency to hallucination is most important in the psychological development of his character.

We are not to understand that Macbeth had entertained any idea of his great crime, before the suggestion of it arising from the devil's interview on Forres heath. That he yields to it is only too evident from the passage beginning "Stars hide your fires." That his wife should form the same guilty purpose, upon the mere recital in his letter of the supernatural information he had obtained of that which was in the "coming on of time," proves not that he had suggested it to her, but that she was prone to entertain it on slighter grounds, and that there was between them that unity of thought and desire which is common between man and wife who are much wrapt in each other.

The struggle of Macbeth before he yields to the suggestion is so fierce that horror and pain are forthwith stamped upon his features. His wife exclaims, when he meets her :

"Your face, my thane, is like a book, where men
May read strange matters."

For herself, she hath no faltering ; she hath no need of supernatural appearances to "prick the sides of her intent." Ambition and the desire "of sovereign sway and masterdom" are to her undaunted metal

the all-sufficient motives of the terrible deed which she plotted and instigated, and would have perpetrated, had not a touch of filial piety withheld her hand. Strange inconsistency of humanity which leaves not the darkest moments of the lost soul without stray gleams of light.

“Had he not resembled
My father as he slept, I had done’t.”

This is one of the “compunctionous visitings of nature,” against which she invokes the murdering ministers whose sightless substances wait on nature’s mischief, in that expression of sublimated wickedness in which she welcomes the fatal entrance of Duncan under her battlements.

The wavering of Macbeth, expressed in his first soliloquy, appears to us very different from the “prudential reasonings,” which, according to Coleridge, he mistakes for conscience. Surely it indicates a sensitive appreciation of right motive, and the fear of punishment in the life to come; the acknowledgment also that crime, even in this world, receives its due reward from the operation of even-handed justice; the acknowledgment of the foul nature of treachery to a kinsman and disloyalty to a king. Moreover, that expression of sincere pity for the gracious Duncan, whose meek and holy character is depicted in so fine a contrast to his own fierce and wayward passions, is a sentiment far removed from

“prudential reasonings.” Thus he convinces himself against the deed, and concludes :

“I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent, but only
Vaulting ambition, which o'erleaps its'sell,
And falls on the other.”

When Lady Macbeth joins him, he expresses his virtuous resolve, and for the first time adds “prudential reasonings”:

“We will proceed no further in this business :
He hath honour'd me of late ; and I have bought
Golden opinions from all sorts of people,
Which would be worn now in their newest gloss,
Not cast aside so soon.”

Then mark the temptation to which the terrible woman subjects him ; the taunts of cowardice and weakness ; taunts to which a soldier gifted with sensitive personal bravery would be keenly alive, especially coming from the lips of a beautiful woman whom he loved :

“Was the hope drunk
Wherein you dress'd yourself? bath it slept since ?
And wakes it now, to look so green and pale
At what it did so freely ? From this time
Such I account thy love. Art thou afraid
To be the same in thine own act and valour
As thou art in desire?”

Further she urges the temptation by comparing his vacillating desire with her own fell purpose, in that terrible passage :

“I have given suck, and know
How tender 'tis to love the babe that milks me :

I would, while it was smiling in my face,
 Have pluck'd the nipple from his boneless gums,
 And dash'd the brains out, had I so sworn as you
 Have done to this."

Fearing that his better nature would relent, she had sworn him to the treacherous and bloody deed. She concludes by shewing clearly the opportunity. She will ply the two chamberlains with wine and wassail, until

"Memory, the warder of the brain,
 Shall be a fume, and the receipt of reason
 A limbeck only : when in swinish sleep
 Their drenched natures lie as in a death—"

Well may Macbeth exclaim in astonishment :

"Bring forth men-children only ;
 For thy undaunted mettle should compose
 Nothing but males."

He reels under the fierce battery of temptation, and when she has thus poured her spirits into his ear, and chastised his compunctions with the valour of her tongue, he falls, without time for further thought, rushing into the commission of his first great crime.

"I am settled, and bend up
 Each corporal agent to this terrible feat.
 Away, and mock the time with fairest show :
 False face must hide what the false heart doth know."

As in earliest time, the temptation was urged by the woman. Woman, infinitely the most virtuous, distances her partner when she has once entered the career of crime.

"Denn, geht es zu des Bösen Haus,
 Das Weib hat tausend Schritt voraus."

The dagger scene is an illustration of Shakespeare's finest psychological insight. An hallucination of sight resulting from the high-wrought nervous tension of the regicide, and "the present horror of the time," and typifying in form the dread purpose of his mind is impressed upon his senses, but rejected by his judgment is recognised as a morbid product of mental excitement, and finally its existence altogether repudiated, and the bloody business of the mind made answerable for the foolery of the senses.

"Is this a dagger which I see before me,
The handle toward my hand? Come, let me clutch thee.

I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible
To feeling as to sight? or art thou but
A dagger of the mind, a false creation,
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain?
I see thee yet, in form as palpable
As this which now I draw.
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going;
And such an instrument I was to use.
Mine eyes are made the fools o' the other senses,
Or else worth all the rest; I see thee still,
And on thy blade and dudgeon gouts of blood,
Which was not so before. There's no such thing:
It is the bloody business which informs
Thus to mine eyes."

The deed is done! and the terrible punishment of guilt commences from the very moment. Remorse dogs the murderer's heels even from the chamber of death.

"*Macb.* One cried *God bless us!* and *Amen'* the other;

As they had seen me with these hangman's hands.
 Listening their fear, I could not say 'Amen,'
 When they did say 'God bless us !'

Lady M. Consider it not so deeply.

Macb. But wherefore could not I pronounce 'Amen'?
 I had most need of blessing, and 'Amen'
 Stuck in my throat.

Lady M. These deeds must not be thought
 After these ways ; so, *it will make us mad.*"

Guilt hath instantly changed the brave man into a
 coward.

"I am afraid to think what I have done ;
 Look on't again I dare not."

"How is't with me, when every noise appals me?"

The sting of remorse extorts from him the direct
 expression of regret :

"To know my deed, 'twere best not know myself."
 "Wake Duncan with thy knocking ! *Would thou could'st !*"

Compare this with the woman's firmer nerve, rebuking
 him :

"You do unbend your noble strength, to think
So brainsickly of things."

"Infirm of purpose !
 Give me the daggers : the sleeping and the dead
 Are but as pictures : 'tis the eye of childhood
 That fears a painted devil."

She enters the murder chamber, to do that which her
 mate dare not do, and shewing her hands, gilded like
 the faces of the grooms with Duncan's blood, says :

"My hands are of your colour ; but I shame
 To wear a heart so white."

And this is the lady whom Mr. Coleridge describes as courageous in fancy only !

The passage, "Methought I heard a voice," &c., is scarcely to be accepted as another instance of hallucination, an hallucination of hearing parallel to that of sight in the appearance of the dagger. It is rather an instance of merely excited imagination without sensual representation, like the "suggestion whose horrid image" is spoken of on Forres heath. The word "*methought*" is sufficient to distinguish this voice of the fancy from an hallucination of sense. The lengthened reasoning of the fancied speech is also unlike an hallucination of hearing ; real hallucinations of hearing being almost always restricted to two or three words, or at furthest, to brief sentences. How exquisite is this description of sleep ! How correct, psychologically, is the threat that remorse will murder sleep ! How true the prediction to the course of the drama, in which we find that hereafter the murderer did "lack the season of all natures, sleep !"

"Macb. Methought I heard a voice cry, *Sleep no more!*
Macbeth doth murder sleep, the innocent sleep,
Sleep that knits up the ravell'd sleeve of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast,—

Lady M. What do you mean ?

Macb. Still it cried *Sleep no more!* to all the house :
Glamis hath murder'd sleep, and therefore Cawdor
Shall sleep no more; Macbeth shall sleep no more."

When the first agony of remorseful excitement has

passed, its more settled phase is expressed in the life-weary, Hamlet-like melancholy of the passage :

“ Had I but died an hour before this chance,
I had lived a blessed time ; for, from this instant,
There’s nothing serious in mortality :
All is but toys : renown and grace is dead ;
The wine of life is drawn, and the mere lees
Is left this vault to brag of.”

The description of the night of murder is conceived to add to the supernatural. By lamentings in the air, earthquake, eclipse, prodigies in animal life, things “unnatural, even like the deed that’s done,” the mental effect of awe is skilfully produced, and the feeling of Macbeth’s balance between fate and free-will is maintained just at that point which enables us both to sympathize and condemn.

Macbeth at last hath obtained the “ All hail hereafter ;” but the furies of conscience rack his soul with cowardly and anxious thoughts. He is cowed by the presence of a brave and honest man, his old friend and colleague, whose royalty of nature, dauntless temper, and the prudence with which he acts, make him an object of fear, and his presence a rebuke. Jealousy, moreover, of the greatness which the weird Sisters had promised to the issue of Banquo, rankles in his mind, now debased by guilt and the fertile seed-ground of all evil passion.

“ For Banquo’s issue have I filed my mind ;
For them the gracious Duncan have I murder’d ;
Put rancours in the vessel of my peace

Only for them ; and mine eternal jewel
Given to the common enemy of man,
To make them kings, the seed of Banquo kings !
Rather than so, come fate into the list,
And champion me to the utterance !”

Strange inconsistency ! He yields to Fate when its decrees jump with his own desires ; but when the tide turns he resolves to breast its irresistible wave. One is inclined, however, to the belief, that the first reason assigned for Banquo's death was the most potent, that “there is none but he whose being I do fear.” Macbeth had no children, and the descent of the crown could not touch his feelings or interests. When he learns that Fleance has escaped, he feels “bound in to saucy doubts and fears ;” but, on the whole, he treats the escape as a light matter, and as the cause of future danger to himself, rather than of anxiety respecting the succession.

How awful is the retribution which the Nemesis of conscience works upon the guilty pair ; and that before they have cause to dread any earthly retribution. Duncan's sons are fugitives in foreign lands. The peers gather freely round the court of the new king. Suspicions have indeed arisen in the mind of Banquo, but he breathes them only to himself, and commends his indissoluble duties to the king. All without seems fair ; but within ? Listen to the deep sound of melancholy surging from the heart of the imperious woman :

“ Nought's had, all's spent,

Where our desire is got without content :
'Tis safer to be that which we destroy
Than by destruction dwell in doubtful joy."

From these sad lonely thoughts she rouses herself to chide her lord for permitting similar thoughts to be expressed legibly on his more sensitive organization.

"*Lady M.* How now, my lord ! why do you keep alone,
Of sorriest fancies your companions making,
Using those thoughts which should indeed have died
With them they think on ? Things without all remedy
Should be without regard : what's done is done.

Macbeth. We have scotch'd the snake, not kill'd it :
She'll close and be herself, whilst our poor malice
Remains in danger of her former tooth.
But let the frame of things disjoint, both the worlds suffer,
Ere we will eat our meal in fear and sleep
In the affliction of these terrible dreams
That shake us nightly : better be with the dead,
Whom we, to gain our peace, have sent to peace,
Than on the torture of the mind to lie
In restless ecstasy."

Well might she feel it needful to urge upon him the policy of sleeking o'er his rugged looks, and of being bright and jovial among his guests ; but how deep the agony of the reply :

"O, full of scorpions is my mind, dear wife !"

The banquet scene following the murder of Banquo is unrivalled in dramatic force and psychological truth. The kingly host hath put on a forced cheerfulness. He will play the humble host, and sit in the midst. He commands his guests to be large in mirth. He has something like a grim jest for the murderer

who appears at the side door, to whom he makes the only play on words in the tragedy, the porter's ribaldry excepted.

"*Macbeth.* There's blood upon thy face.

Murderer. 'Tis Banquo's then.

Macb. 'Tis better thee *without* than he *within*."

"Thou art the best o' the cut-throats : yet he's good
That did the like for Fleance : if thou didst it,
Thou art the *nonparceil*."

The short-lived effort to be gay subsides into the usual abstracted mood, and Lady Macbeth needs to chide him: "You do not give the cheer," &c. He makes an effort, giving that physiological grace before meat :

"Now good digestion wait on appetite,
And health on both!"

He playfully challenges the absence of Banquo as an act of unkindness, thus by a voluntary mental act calling before his mind's eye the image of the murdered man. When invited to sit, "The table's full." He says—"Here's a place reserved, sir."—"Where? which of you have done this?" None see the shadowy form except Macbeth himself, and his first impression is that it is a sorry jest; but how quickly does he believe in the supernatural nature of his visitor: "Thou canst not say I did it; never shake thy gory locks at me." He looks "on that which might appal the devil," but which no eyes but his own can see. Although "quite unmann'd in folly," fear turns to daring, and he threatens the ghost:

"Prithee, see there ! behold ! look ! lo ! how say you ?
Why, what care I ? If thou canst nod, speak too.
If charnel-houses and our graves must send
Those that we bury back, our monuments
Shall be the maws of kites."

The hallucination fades, and his natural high courage allows him on the moment to philosophize upon the appearance :

"Blood hath been shed ere now, i' the olden time,
Ere human statute purged the gentle weal ;
Ay, and since too, murders have been perform'd
Too terrible for the ear : the times have been,
That, when the brains were out, the man would die,
And there an end ; but now they rise again,
With twenty mortal murders on their crowns,
And push us from our stools : this is more strange
Than such a murder is."

Again roused from reverie by his wife, he excuses his behaviour by the same reference to a customary infirmity, which is twice alluded to for the same purpose by his wife :

"I do forget.
Do not muse at me, my most worthy friends ;
I have a strange infirmity, which is nothing
To those that know me."

He proposes a bumper health to the general joy of the whole table, and to that in particular of "our dear friend Banquo," this second reference shewing how his mind is fascinated with the idea of the dead man, and having the immediate effect of re-establishing the hallucination. Then comes that burst of despairing

defiance, when the extremity of fear changes to audacity :

“Avaunt ! and quit my sight ! let the earth hide thee !
Thy bones are marrowless, thy blood is cold ;
Thou hast no speculation in those eyes
Which thou dost glare with !”

“What man dare, I dare :
Approach thou like the rugged Russian bear,
The arm’d rhinoceros, or the Hyrcan tiger ;
Take any shape but that, and my firm nerves
Shall never tremble : or be alive again,
And dare me to the desert with thy sword ;
If trembling I exhibit then, protest me
The baby of a girl. Hence, horrible shadow !
Unreal mockery, hence !—Why, so : being gone,
I am a man again. Pray you, sit still.”

He is astonished that the others present are not moved by the object of his dread. Unlike the air-drawn dagger, which he recognised as an hallucination, he believes this appearance to have been most real. He does this notwithstanding his wife’s assurance that—

“This is the very painting of your fear :
This is the air-drawn dagger which, you said,
Led you to Duncan.”

She gives no credence to matters which

“Would well become
A woman’s story at a winter’s fire,
Authorized by her grandam.”

She taunts him, and assures him :

“Why do you make such faces ? When all’s done,
You look but on a stool.”

It is markworthy that the ghost of Banquo is seen to no one but Macbeth, differing in this respect from that of Hamlet's father. Moreover, Banquo's ghost is silent: Hamlet's ghost is a conversational being, subject to disappearance at cock-crow and other ghost laws; points indicating the poet's intention to represent the ghost of Banquo as an hallucination, not as an apparition, a creation of the heat-oppressed brain, not a shadowy messenger from spirit-land. It is the pathological Nemesis of guilt, not a spiritual existence returned to the confines of the day actively to assist in the discovery of guilt. The progress of the morbid action is depicted with exquisite skill. First, there is the horrible picture of the imagination not transferred to the sense, then there is the sensual hallucination whose reality is questioned and rejected, and now there is the sensual hallucination whose reality is fully accepted.

Are we to accept the repeated assurance, both from Macbeth and from his wife, that he is subject to sudden fits of mental bereavement? or was it a steady lie, coined on the spur of the moment, as an excuse for his strange behaviour?

“Sit, worthy friends: my lord is often thus,
And hath been from his youth: pray you, keep seat;
The fit is momentary; upon a thought
He will again be well: if much you note him,
You shall offend him, and extend his passion.”

And again:

“Think of this, good peers,

But as a thing of custom : 'tis no other ;
Only it spoils the pleasure of the time."

Macbeth is at this juncture in a state of mind closely bordering upon disease, if he have not actually passed the limit. He is hallucinated, and, in respect to the appearance of Banquo, he believes in the hallucination, and refers it to the supernatural agencies which discover the "secret'st man of blood." The reality of the air-drawn dagger he did not believe in, but referred its phenomena to their proper source, with as much truth, though not with as much phlegm, as Nicolai or any other sane subject of hallucination could have done. Unlike the hallucinations of Nicolai and Ben Jonson, it caused terror although its unreality was fully recognised, because it suited with "the horror of the time" of which it was a reflex. But between this time and the appearance of Banquo, the stability of Macbeth's reason had undergone a fearful ordeal. He lacked "the season of all natures —sleep;" or, when he did sleep, it was

"In the affliction of those terrible dreams
That shake us nightly."

Waking, he made his companions of the "sorriest fancies;" and, "on the torture of the mind," he lay "in restless ecstasy." Truly, the caution given by his wife was likely to become a prophecy :

"These deeds must not be thought on
After these ways ; so, it will make us mad."

In the point of view of psychological criticism, this

fear appears on the eve of being fulfilled by the man, when to sleepless nights and days of brooding melancholy are added that undeniable indication of insanity, a credited hallucination. It was in reality fulfilled in the instance of the woman, although, at the point we have reached, when she with clear intellect and well-balanced powers is supporting her horror-struck and hallucinated husband, she offers a character little likely, on her next appearance, to be the subject of profound and fatal insanity. The man, on the other hand, appears to be almost within the limits of mental disease. Macbeth, however, saved himself from actual insanity by rushing from the maddening horrors of meditation into a course of decisive resolute action. From henceforth he gave himself no time to reflect; he made the firstlings of his heart the firstlings of his hand; he became a fearful tyrant to his country; but he escaped madness. This change in him, however, effected a change in his relation to his wife, which in her had the opposite result. Up to this time her action had been that of sustaining him; but when he waded forward in a sea of blood, without desire of the tedious return, when his thoughts were acted ere they were scanned, then his queen found her occupation gone. Her attention, heretofore directed to her husband and to outward occurrences, was forced inwards upon that wreck of all-content which her meditation supplied. The sanitary mental influence of action is thus im-

pressively shewn. Even the stings of conscience, if not blunted, can for a time be averted, by that busy march of affairs, which attracts all the attention outwardly, and throws the faculty of reflection into disuse.

The rapid deterioration of Macbeth's moral nature deserves notice. The murder of the king, to which he had the greatest temptation, was effected in the midst of a storm of conscientious rebuke. The murder of Banquo was attended with no expression of remorse, although it highly stimulated the imagination; for this also he had temptation. But shortly afterwards we find him committing a wholesale and motiveless deed of blood, in the assassination of the kindred of Macduff—far more atrocious and horrible, if there can be degrees in the guilt of such deeds, than all he has done before. At first we find him “infirm of purpose” in guilt. Referring either to his want of sleep or to his hallucination, he says :

“ My strange and self-abuse
Is the initiate fear, that wants hard use :—
We are yet but young in deeds.”

Afterwards he becomes indeed “bloody, bold, and resolute ;” and he orders the massacre of Macduff's kindred without hesitation or compunction.

“ From this moment
The very firstlings of my heart shall be
The firstlings of my hand. And even now,
To crown my thoughts with acts, be it thought and done :
The castle of Macduff I will surprise ;

Seize upon Fife ; give to the edge o' the sword
 His wife, his babes, and all unfortunate souls
 That trace him in his line. No boasting like a fool ;
 This deed I'll do before this purpose cool."

Subsequently to this foul deed, the tyrant supported his power with many acts of sudden and bloody violence : for, notwithstanding the great rapidity of action in the drama, an interval in reality of some years must be supposed between the first and last acts, during which time

" Each new morn,
 New widows howl ; new orphans cry ; new sorrows
 Strike heaven on the face."

See also the fine description of the country under the tyrant's sway given by Rosse :

" The dead man's knell
 Is there scarce ask'd for who ; and good men's lives
 Expire before the flowers in their caps,
 Dying or ere they sicken."

The change in Macbeth's nervous system, from its early sensibility, when he was young in deeds of guilt, to the obtuseness brought on by hard use, is later in the piece described by himself :

" *Seyton.* It is the cry of women, my good lord.
Macbeth. I have almost forgot the taste of fears :
 The time has been, my senses would have quail'd
 To hear a night-shriek ; and my fell of hair
 Would at a dismal treatise rouse and stir
 As life were in 't : I have supp'd full with horrors ;
 Direnness, familiar to my slaughterous thoughts,
 Cannot once start me.—Wherefore was that cry ?
Sey. The queen, my lord, is dead."

To the last, the shadow of madness is most skilfully indicated as hovering around Macbeth, without the reality actually falling upon him. When finally brought to bay in his stronghold, the opinion of his madness is positively expressed :

“Great Dunsinane he strongly fortifies :
Some say he’s mad ; others that lesser hate him
Do call it valiant fury : but, for certain,
He cannot buckle his distemper’d cause
Within the belt of rule.”

The cause of his reputed madness is conscience.

“Who then shall blame
His pester’d senses to recoil and start,
When all that is within him does condemn
Itself for being there ?”

The defiant fierceness of his resistance is not within the belt of rule. He’ll fight till from his bones the flesh is hacked ; put on his armour before ’tis needed ;

“Send out more horses ; skirr the country round ;
Hang those that talk of fear.”

But with all this valiant fury, he is sick at heart, oppressed with profound weariness of life : “I ’gin to be a-weary of the sun.” What exquisite pathos in the melancholy passages :

“My way of life
Is fall’n into the sear, the yellow leaf ;
And that which should accompany old age,
As honour, love, obedience, troops of friends,
I must not look to have ; but, in their stead,
Curses, not loud but deep, mouth-honour, breath,
Which the poor heart would fain deny, and dare not.”

And in this, so Hamlet like :

“ She should have died hereafter ;
There would have been a time for such a word.
To-morrow, and to-morrow, and to-morrow,
Creeps in this petty pace from day to day,
To the last syllable of recorded time,
And all our yesterdays have lighted fools
The way to dusty death. Out, out, brief candle !
Life’s but a walking shadow, a poor player
That struts and frets his hour upon the stage
And then is heard no more : it is a tale
Told by an idiot, full of sound and fury,
Signifying nothing.”

When all hope has fled, his superabundant activity rejects the very idea of self-destruction. He will not play the Roman fool, and die on his own sword. Gashes look best on others. In the last scene, in which the lying juggling of the fiend is unmasked, and he falls by the sword of Macduff, some remaining touches of conscience and of nature are shewn. At first he refuses to fight :

“ My soul is too much charged
With blood of thine already.”

When even fate deserts him, and his better part of man is cowed, he fights bravely to the last, and falls in a manner which the poet takes care to mark, in the scene which immediately follows, as the honourable end of a soldier’s life. He descends from the light a fearful example of a noble mind, depraved by yielding to the tempter ; a terrible evidence of the fires of hell lighted in the breast of a living man by his own act.

The character of Lady Macbeth is less interesting to the psychological student than that of her husband. It is far less complex ; drawn with a classic simplicity of outline, it presents us with none of those balancing and contending emotions which make the character of Macbeth so wide and varied a field of study. It does not come within the scope of this criticism to enquire at length into the relative degree of wickedness and depravity exhibited by the two great criminals. Much ingenious speculation has been expended on this subject, one upon which writers are never likely entirely to agree so long as different people have antipathies and preferences for different forms of character. The first idea of the crime undoubtedly comes into the mind of Macbeth before he sees his wife ; the suggestion of it fills his mind immediately after his interview with the weird Sisters, and he indicates the strong hold which the horrible imagination takes on him.

“ Stars, hide your fires ;
Let not light see my black and deep desires :
The eye wink at the hand ; yet let that be,
Which the eye fears, when it is done, to see.”

But in Macbeth’s letter to his wife there is not a word by which the enterprise can be said to be broken to her, and she expresses her own fell purpose before their meeting. At the first moment of their meeting she replies to his assertion, that Duncan goes hence to-morrow :

“O, never
Shall sun that morrow see!”

The idea of the crime arises in the minds of both man and wife, without suggestion from either to the other; though in Macbeth the idea is a “horrible imagining,” while in Lady Macbeth it is a “fell purpose.”

Lady Macbeth's subsequent taunt,—

“What beast was’t, then,
That made you break this enterprise to me?”

“Nor time nor place did then cohere,
And yet you would make both,”—

appears to us, though we dare hardly say it, a flaw in the plot. It is certainly inconsistent with Lady Macbeth's language at her first meeting with her lord. The truthfulness of these expressions can only be saved by supposing them to have referred to confidences between husband and wife on Duncan's murder, before Macbeth went to the wars; a supposition inconsistent with the development of the wicked thought as it is pourtrayed after the meeting with the weird Sisters.

The terrible remorseless impersonation of passionate ambition delineated in the character of Lady Macbeth is not gradually developed, but is placed at once in all its fierce power before us in that awful invocation to the spirits of evil:

“Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me from the crown to the toe top-full

Of direst cruelty ! make thick my blood ;
Stop up the access and passage to remorse,
That no compunctionous visitings of nature
Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
The effect and it ! Come to my woman's breasts,
And take my milk for gall, you murdering ministers,
Wherever in your sightless substances
You wait on nature's mischief ! Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunkest smoke of hell,
That my keen knife see not the wound it makes,
Nor heaven peep through the blanket of the dark,
To cry *Hold, Hold!*"

With what vehemence and unchanging resolution does she carry out this fell purpose ; how she dominates the spirit of her vacillating husband ; with what inflexible and pitiless determination she pursues that one great crime which gives her sovereign sway and masterdom ! It is, however, to be remarked, that she is not exhibited as participating in her husband's crimes after the murder of Duncan. Having seized upon "the golden round," her high moral courage and self-contained nature save her from those eternal suspicions and that restlessness of imagination which lead her husband onward from crime to crime. Her want of imagination, her very want of sympathy, would save her from that perversion of sympathy, which in her husband resulted in useless deeds of blood. There are some characters capable of committing one great crime, and of resting upon it ; there are others in whom the first crime is certainly and necessarily followed by a series of crimes. A bad, cold, selfish, and unfeeling heart may preserve a

person from that fever of wickedness which a more sympathising nature is prone to run into when the sympathies are perverted, and the mobile organization lends itself to effect their destructive suggestions. We have above indicated the turning point of Lady Macbeth's madness to have been the state of inactivity into which she fell when her husband broke away from her support into that bloody, bold, and resolute career which followed the murder of Banquo. We can only speculate upon her course of conduct from this time. She probably in some manner gave her countenance to her husband's career, or she would scarcely have been called his "fiend-like queen"; for it must be remembered, that, although the reader is well aware of her guilt, no suspicion of her participation in Duncan's murder has been excited in the other personages of the drama. We may suppose, then, that without active participation in that career of tyranny which desolated Scotland, she looked on with frigid and cruel indifference, while her imagination having no power to throw itself outwardly, it became the prey of one engrossing emotion, that of remorse. Giving no outward expression of it in word or deed, she verified the saying of Malcolm—

"The grief that does not speak,
Whispers the o'erfraught heart, and bids it break."

Cold, stedfast, and self-contained, she could no more escape from the gnawing tooth of remorse, than Prometheus, chained upon his rock, could escape from

the vulture-talons for ever tearing his vitals. In Macbeth's more demonstrative and flexible nature passion was explosive; in her it was consuming. In him the inward fires found a volcanic vent; in her their pent-up force shook in earthquake the deep foundations of the soul.

Lady Macbeth's end is psychologically even more instructive than that of her husband. The manner in which even-handed justice deals with her, "his fiend-like wife," is an exquisite masterpiece of dramatic skill. The undaunted metal which would have compelled her to resist to the last, if brought face to face with any resistible adversaries, gradually gives way to the feeling of remorse and deep melancholy when left to feed upon itself. The moral object of the drama required that the fierce gnawing of remorse at the heart of the lady should be made manifest; and, as her firm self-contained nature imposes upon her a reticence in her waking moments in strong contrast to the soliloquising loquacity of her demonstrative husband, the great dramatist has skilfully availed himself of the sleep-talking state in which she uncovers the corroding ulcers of her conscience. Whether the deep melancholy of remorse often tends to exhibit itself in somnambulism, is a fact which may on scientific grounds be doubted. Shakespeare makes the Doctor himself express the doubt: "This disease is beyond my practice; yet I have known those which have walked in their sleep, who have died holily in

their beds." The phenomena of sleep-walking are painted with great truthfulness. In this slumbrous agitation "the benefit of sleep" cannot be received, as the Doctor thinks. It neither exerts its soothing effects on the mind, nor is it "chief nourisher in life's feast" to the body.—Light must be left by her continually. Was this to avert the presence of those "sightless substances" once so impiously invoked?—She "seems washing her hands," and "continues in this a quarter of an hour." What a comment on her former boast, "A little water clears us of this deed."—The panorama of her crime passes before her, searing the eye-balls of the fancy; a fancy usually so cold and impassive, but now in agonising erethism. A wise and virtuous man can "thank God for his happy dreams," in which "the slumber of the body seems to be but the waking of the soul"; dreams of which he says "it is the ligation of sense, but the liberty of reason, and our waking conceptions do not match the fancies of our sleep." "There is surely a nearer apprehension of anything that delights us in our dreams than in our waked senses." "Were my memory as faithful as my reason is then fruitful, I would never study but in my dreams; and this time also would I chuse for my devotions." (*Religio Medici.*) But the converse? Who can tell the torture of bad dreams! Surely, 'tis better in the mind to lie in restless ecstacy, than thus to have the naked fancy stretched upon the rack; all its defences gone, all

power of voluntary attention and abstraction, all guidance of the thoughts, all judgment abrogated. What more lurid picture of hell can be formed than that it is one long bad dream !

Gentlewoman. Since his majesty went into the field, I have seen her rise from the bed, throw her night-gown upon her, unlock her closet, take forth paper, fold it, write upon't, read it, afterwards seal it, and again return to bed; yet all this while in a most fast sleep.

Doctor. A great perturbation in nature, to receive at once the benefit of sleep, and do the effects of watching ! In this slumbery agitation, besides her walking and other actual performances, what, at any time, have you heard her say ?

* * * * *

Gent. Lo you, here she comes ! This is her very guise ; and, upon my life, fast asleep. Observe her ; stand close.

Doct. How came she by that light ?

Gent. Why, it stood by her : she has light by her continually ; 'tis her command.

Doct. You see, her eyes are open.

Gent. Ay, but their sense is shut.

Doct. What is it she does now ? Look, how she rubs her hands.

Gent. It is an accustomed action with her, to seem thus washing her hands : I have known her continue in this a quarter of an hour.

Lady Macbeth. Yet here's a spot.

Doct. Hark ! she speaks : I will set down what comes from her, to satisfy my remembrance the more strongly.

Lady M. Out, damned spot ! out, I say !—One : two : why, then 'tis time to do't.—Hell is murky !—Fie, my lord, fie ! a soldier, and afraid ? What need we fear who knows it, when none can call our power to account ?—Yet who would have thought the old man to have had so much blood in him.

Doct. Do you mark that ?

Lady M. The thane of Fife had a wife : where is she

now?—What, will these hands ne'er be clean?—No more o' that, my lord, no more o' that: you mar all with this starting.

Doct. Go to, go to; you have known what you should not.

Gent. She has spoke what she should not, I am sure of that: heaven knows what she has known.

Lady. Here's the smell of the blood still: all the perfumes of Arabia will not sweeten this little hand. Oh, oh, oh!

Doct. What a sigh is there! The heart is sorely charged.

Gent. I would not have such a heart in my bosom for the dignity of the whole body."

The diagnosis arrived at by the judicious and politic Doctor appears to have been, that she was scarcely insane, but so sorely troubled in conscience as to be prone to quit the anguish of this life by means of suicide.

“Unnatural deeds
Do breed unnatural troubles: infected minds
To their deaf pillows will discharge their secrets:
More needs she the divine than the physician.
God, God forgive us all! Look after her;
Remove from her the means of all annoyance,
And still keep eyes upon her.”

A passage at the very end of the drama indicates, though it does not assert, that the fear of the Doctor was realized—

“his fiend-like queen,
Who, as 'tis thought, by self and violent hands
Took off her life.”

This diagnosis of the Doctor, that actual disease was not present, is again expressed in his interview with Macbeth:

Macb. How does your patient, doctor?

Doct. Not so sick, my lord,
As she is troubled with thick-coming fancies,
That keep her from her rest.

Macb. Cure her of that.
Canst thou not minister to a mind diseased,
Pluck from the memory a rooted sorrow,
Raze out the written troubles of the brain,
And with some sweet oblivious antidote
Cleanse the stuff'd bosom of that perilous stuff
Which weighs upon the heart?

Doct. Therein the patient
Must minister to himself.

Macb. Throw physic to the dogs ; I'll none of it."

This contempt of physic was not ill-founded upon the want of reliance which the Doctor expressed on the resources of his art. In those early times the leech and the mediciner had not learnt to combine the moral influences which are the natural means of ministering to a mind diseased after the manner of Lady Macbeth's, with those sleep-producing oblivious antidotes which at present form the remedies of melancholia. Such a patient would not now be given over, either to the divine, or to the unresisted ravages of conscience. What indeed could the divine effect without the aid of the physician ? or, rather, until the physician had done his work ? In such a state of nervous system as that of this wretched lady, no judicious divine would attempt to excite religious emotion ; indeed, all thoughts of the world to come would act as fuel to the fire of a conscience so remorseful. The treatment of such a case as that of

Lady Macbeth would be, to remove her from all scenes suggesting unhappy thoughts, to attract her attention to new objects of interest, and to find, if possible, some stimulus to healthy emotion. If she had been thrown from her high estate, and compelled to labour for her daily bread, the tangible evils of such a condition would have been, most likely, to have rooted out those of the imagination and of memory. The judicious physician, moreover, would not in such a case have neglected the medicinal remedies at his command, especially those which Macbeth himself seems to indicate, under the title of some sweet oblivious antidote. He would have given the juice of poppy, or some "drowsy syrup," to prevent thick-coming fancies depriving her of rest. He would thus have replaced the unrefreshing, nay, exhausting sleep of somnambulism, for that condition so beautifully described, earlier in the play, as that which

"knits up the ravell'd sleave of care,
The death of each day's life, sore labour's bath,
Balm of hurt minds, great nature's second course,
Chief nourisher in life's feast."

When these remedies had produced their effect, and the patient's remorse was no longer of that "brain-sickly" kind accompanying disorders of the organization, then, and only then, might the divine step in with those consolations of religious faith which assure us that "though your sins be as scarlet, they shall

be as white as snow ; though they be red like crimson, they shall be as wool."

What was Lady Macbeth's form and temperament? In Maclise's great painting of the banquet scene, she is represented as a woman of large and coarse development; a Scandinavian amazon, the muscles of whose brawny arms could only have been developed to their great size by hard and frequent use; a woman of whose fists her husband might well be afraid; but scarcely one who would present that Satanic spiritualization of character which we find in this awful impersonation of dauntless and ruthless ambition; an instrument, in fact, to do coarse things coarsely; a butcher's cleaver perhaps, but by no means the keen scimitar whose rapid blow destroys ere it is seen. We do not so figure Lady Macbeth to the mind's eye—no, not even as the large and majestic figure of Siddons, whose impersonation of the character so moved our fathers. Shakespeare was not in the habit of delineating big and brawny women. There is a certain femininity in his female characters, which is distinguishable even in those whom he has filled with the coarser passions. But that Lady Macbeth, whose soul is absorbed and whose devilish deeds are instigated by ambition, the highest of all earthly passions, "the last infirmity of noble minds," which, like Aaron's rod, consumes and destroys the meaner desires,—that this woman should have had the physical conformation of a cook, is a monstrous

libel upon the sex. Regan and Goneril, whom we not only hate, but who excite disgust in our minds, might have been such women, coarse and low natures as they were ; and indeed they are represented as using their fists with a freedom proving the reliance they placed in the efficiency of that safety-valve to passion.; and Lear threatens the wolfish visage of one with the nails of the other. But was Lady Macbeth such a being ? Did the fierce fire of her soul animate the epicene bulk of a virago ? Never ! Lady Macbeth was a lady beautiful and delicate, whose one vivid passion proves that her organization was instinct with nerve-force, unoppressed by weight of flesh. Probably she was small ; for it is the smaller sort of women whose emotional fire is the most fierce, and she herself bears unconscious testimony to the fact that her hand was little. The drama contains many indications that to outward appearance she was gentle and feminine. Duncan greets her by the name of "most kind hostess"; and, after the murder, Macduff says :

"Gentle lady,
'Tis not for you to hear what I can speak :
The repetition in a woman's ear
Would murder as it fell."

Although she manifests no feeling towards Macbeth beyond the regard which ambition makes her yield, it is clear that he entertains for her the personal love which a beautiful woman would excite. Returning

from the wars, he greets her with "Dearest love!" "Dearest partner of my greatness!" Afterwards he lavishes upon her the terms of endearment, "Love!" "Dear wife!" "Dearest chuck!" "Sweet remembrancer!" Above all, she makes use of his love to taunt him with his change of purpose, when it looked green and pale at the contemplated murder of Duncan. "From this time," she says, "such I account thy love." She relies upon this threat of disbelief in his love as a goad to urge him to his first great crime; and she applies this motive with the confident assurance that the love was there to give it force. Moreover, the effect of remorse upon her own health proves the preponderance of nerve in her organization. Could the Lady Macbeth of Mr. Maclise, and of others who have painted this lady, have been capable of the fire and force of her character in the commission of her crimes, the remembrance of them would scarcely have disturbed the quiet of her after years. We figure Lady Macbeth to have been a tawny or brown blonde Rachel, with more beauty, with grey and cruel eyes, but with the same slight dry configuration and constitution, instinct with determined nerve-power.*

The scene with the Doctor at the English court

* Since the above was written, we have been informed that Mrs. Siddons herself entertained an opinion of Lady Macbeth's physique similar to our own; and that in Mrs. Jameson's critique on this character, which we have not had the opportunity of consulting, the same opinion is expressed.

has several points of interest, besides that of anti-quarian medicine. It fixes the date of Macbeth's history as that of Edward the Confessor's time. It was doubtless introduced as a compliment to James the First, who assumed the power of curing scrofula, the king's evil, by means of the king's touch. Another passage indicates that it was written in this reign, and thus that it was one of the later productions of the poet. James was descended from Banquo, and in the last Witch scene Macbeth thus refers to the lineage of his rival :

“ And some I see
That two-fold balls and treble sceptres carry.”

HAMLET.

ALL critical study of Hamlet must be psychological ; and as there are few subjects which have been more closely studied, and more copiously written upon, than this magnificent drama, criticism upon it might seem to be exhausted. But human nature itself is still more trite ; yet, study it profoundly as we can, criticise and speculate upon it as we may, much will ever be left outside the largest grasp of those minds who undertake to elucidate so much of it as they can comprehend. *Hamlet* is human nature, or at least a wide range of it, and no amount of criticism can exhaust the wealth of this magnificent storehouse. It invites and evades criticism. Its mysterious profundity fascinates the attention ; its infinite variety and its hidden meanings deny exhaustive analysis. Some leavings of treasure will always be discoverable to those who seek for it in an earnest and reverent spirit. Probably no two minds can ever contemplate Hamlet from exactly the same point of view, as no two men can ever regard human life under exactly the same aspect. Hence truthful criticism of this great drama is not only various as mind itself, but is apt to become reflective of the critic. The strong

sense of Johnson, the subtle insight of Coleridge, the fervid eloquence of Hazlitt, the discriminating tact of Schlegel, are nowhere more evident than in their treatment of this mighty monument of human intellect. Every man who has learned to think, and has dared to question the inward monitor, has seen some part of the character of Hamlet reflected in his own bosom.

It will form no part of the subject of this essay to criticise the dramatic construction of Hamlet. We may, however, confess ourselves to be among those who cannot see in its construction that perfect art which has been so abundantly shewn by Shakespeare in many other pieces. Of the petty anachronisms which sent Hamlet to school in Wittenberg, which allow Ophelia to call for a coach, and the King's palace to resound with salvos of artillery, we make small account; like spots on the sun's surface, they only impress themselves upon those who look upon the great work through some medium capable of obscuring its glories. The great length appears by no means an imperfection of this drama as a composition, whatever it may be as an acting play. The analysis of the motives of human action, which is the great object of this work, could not have been effected if the action had been rapid. Rapidity of action is inconsistent with philosophic self-analysing motives and modes of thought; while the slow and halting progress of the action in this drama not only affords to

the character space and verge enough to unfold the inmost peculiarities of thought and feeling, but develops in the mind of the reader a state of receptivity scarcely less essential to its full appreciation.

Once for all, let us say, in pointing out what appear to us difficulties to a logical apprehension of this piece from that point of view which contemplates the development of character and the laws of mind, we do not urge these difficulties as objections to this great drama, which we love and prize more than any other human piece of composition. We venture to find no fault with Hamlet; we revere even its irregularities, as we prefer the various beauties of forest landscape to the straight walks and trim parterres of a well-kept garden. There are more irregularities and unexpected turns of action in Hamlet than in any other of Shakespeare's plays. Our belief is, that the poet became charmed with the creature of his own imagination as it developed itself from his fertile brain; and that as he gave loose reign to poetic fancy and philosophic reverie, he more than ever spurned the narrow limits of dramatic art. The works of Shakespeare's imagination, contrasted with those of the Greek dramatists, have been said to resemble a vast cathedral, combining in one beautiful structure various forms of architecture, various towers and pinnacles,—the whole irregular, vast, and beautiful. The drama of the Greeks, on the other hand, has been said to resemble their temples, finished in one

style, perfect and regular. The *simile* is true and instructive, and in no case more so than in its application to Hamlet. If in our admiration of its whole effect,—if in our reverent examination of its parts, its pinnacles of beauty, its shrines of passion, its gorgeous oriels of many-coloured thought,—we venture to express the difficulties we experience in understanding how one part grew out of another, and the many parts grew to form the wondrous whole, let our criticism be accepted as that of one who examines only to learn and to enjoy.

It is known that Shakespeare devoted more time to this than to any other of his works, and that in its construction he altered and re-altered much. The work bears evident traces of this elaboration, both in its lengthy and slow action, in its great diversity of incident and character, and in the perfection of its parts contrasted with some loss of uniformity as a whole. Some of his plays (as the Merry Wives of Windsor) Shakespeare is said to have thrown off with incredible rapidity and facility; but this certainly is not one in which he “warbled his native wood-notes wild.” It was the laboured and elaborate result of years of toil, of metaphysical introspection and observation. It was the darling child of its great author, and ran some risk of being a little spoiled. A singular trace of this remodeling, which the commentators appear to have overlooked, is left in the different ages which are assigned to Hamlet in the earlier part and

at the end of the drama. The Prince is introduced as a mere youth, whose intent,

“In going back to school in Wittenburg,”
the King opposes. His love is described as

“A violet in the youth of primy nature,”

and he is so “young” that he may walk with a large tether in such matters. He has not even attained his full stature, for

“Nature, crescent, does not grow alone
In thews and bulk ; but, as this temple waxes,
The inward service of the mind and soul
Grows wide withal.”

To his mistress he appears in the “unmatched form and feature of *blown youth*.” In fact, he is a young gentleman of eighteen or thereabouts. The inconsistency of attributing such profound powers of reflection, and such a blasé state of emotion, to a youth who could scarcely have had beard enough to be plucked, appears so forcibly to have struck Shakespeare, that he condescends to that which with him is a matter of the rarest occurrence, an explanation or contradiction of the error. With curious care he makes the Sexton lay down the age of the Prince at thirty years. He came to his office “the very day that young Hamlet was born ;” and he had been “sexton here, man and boy, thirty years.” As if this were not enough, he confirms it with the history of Yorick’s skull, which “has been in the earth three

and twenty years ;" Yorick, whose qualities were well remembered by Hamlet, "a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy ; he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ;" a kind of memory not likely to have stamped itself before the age of seven ; and thus we have Hamlet presented to us not as an unformed youth, but a man of age competent to his power of thought, and of the age most liable to his state of feeling.

The first scene, where the Ghost appears to the sentinels on watch, is constructed with exquisite dramatic verisimilitude, and is admirably adapted to prepare the mind for that contest between the materialism of sensation and that idealism of passion, that doubting effort to discriminate between the things which are and the things which seem, which is the mark thread in the philosophy of the piece.

The Ghost appears at cold and silent midnight. "Tis bitter cold, and I am sick at heart." "Not a mouse stirring," says Francisco. On this Coleridge remarks, that "in all the best attested stories of ghosts and visions, the ghost-seers were in a state of cold or chilling damp from without, and of anxiety inwardly." As far as visions are concerned, this observation might have psychological importance, as tending to indicate the conditions of the nervous system favourable to the production of hallucination ; but with regard to ghosts seen by many persons at the same time, if such things have been, it could only indicate that, escaped for

a while from "sulphurous and tormenting flames," these airy existences preferred to walk on cold nights.

We cannot consent to reduce the Ghost of Hamlet to physiological laws.

"We do it wrong, being so majestical,
To offer it the shew of" *science*.

The Ghost in Hamlet can in no wise be included within the category of illusions or hallucinations ; it is anti-physiological, and must be simply accepted as a dramatic circumstance calculated to produce a certain state of mind in the hero of the piece. Hazlitt well says, that actors playing Macbeth have always appeared to him to have seen the weird sisters on the stage only. He never had seen a stage Macbeth look and act as if he had been face to face with the supernatural. We have experienced the same feeling in seeing the most approved representations of Hamlet ; and doubtless Goëthe had felt the same, since in the representation of Hamlet in *Wilhelm Meister* he produces upon the stage that which the tyro player takes for a real ghost. No person to act the part had been provided, and something marvellous had been mysteriously promised ; but he had forgotten it, probably intending to dispense with the *appearance*. When it came, "the noble figure, the low inaudible breath, the light movements in heavy armour, made such an impression on him that he stood as if transformed to stone, and could only utter in a half-voice, 'Angels and ministers of grace defend

us.' He glared at the form, drew a deep breathing once or twice, and pronounced his address to the Ghost in a manner so confused, so broken, so constrained, that the highest art could not have hit the mark so well." Besides the part it takes in the development of the plot, the *rôle* of the Ghost is to account for, if not to produce, a high-wrought state of nerve in the hero: and in the acting play to produce the same effect in lesser degree on the audience. Fielding has described this, when Tom Jones takes Partridge to see Garrick in the character of Hamlet. The life-like acting of the English Roscius, combined with the superstition of the schoolmaster, produces so thorough a conviction of the actual presence of the Ghost, that the result is one of the drollest scenes ever painted by that inimitable romancist.

Hamlet is from the first moment represented in that mood of melancholy which vents itself in bitter sarcasm: "A little more than kin, and less than kind." He is "too much i' the sun." Sorry quips truly, but yet good enough for the hypocritical King, who wishes to rejoice and to lament at the same moment:

"With an auspicious and a dropping eye,
With mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage,
In equal scale weighing delight and dole."

To the King's unfeeling arguments that the son ought not to grieve for the death of his father, because it is a common theme and an unavailing woe, Hamlet

vouchsafes no reply. But to his mother's rebuke, that the common grief "seems" particular to him, he answers with a vehemence which shews that the clouds which hang on him are surcharged with electric fire :

"Seems, madam ! nay, it is ; I know not 'seems'.
"Tis not alone my inky cloak," &c.

He has that within which passes show ; and, when left alone, he tells us what it is in that outburst of grief :

"O, that this too too solid flesh would melt,
Thaw and resolve itself into a dew !
Or that the Everlasting had not fix'd
His canon 'gainst self-slaughter ! O God ! O God !
How weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable,
Seem to me all the uses of this world !
Fie on't ! ah fie ! 'tis an unweeded garden,
That grows to seed ; things rank and gross in nature
Possess it merely. That it should come to this !
But two months dead ?" &c.

It is the conflict of religious belief with suicidal desire.
In his pure and sensitive mind the conduct of his mother has produced shame and keen distress. His generalising tendency leads him to extend his mother's failings to her whole sex—"Frailty, thy name is woman ;" and from thence the sense of disgust shrouds as with foul mist the beauty of the world, and all its uses seem "weary, stale, flat, and unprofitable." To general dissatisfaction with men and the world succeeds the longing desire to quit the scene of shame and woe. In the subsequent arguments which the Prince holds with himself on suicide, he acknowledges

the constraining power to be the fear of future punishment : but in this passage the higher motive of religious obedience without fear is acknowledged ; a higher and a holier motive for the duty of bearing the evils which God permits, and refusing to break His law to escape from them, whatever their pressure may be.. A bold man may “jump the life to come” in the very spirit of courage ; but a true servant and soldier of God will feel that there is unfaithfulness and cowardice in throwing off by voluntary death whatever burden of sorrows may freight the frail vessel of his life.

The concluding line equally marks profound sorrow, and the position of dependence and constraint in which Hamlet feels himself :

“But break, my heart, for I must hold my tongue.”

And yet what rapid recovery to the quick-witted complaisance of social intercourse, when his friends break in upon these gloomy thoughts ; and, again, mark the natural contiguity, in a mind equally sensitive and melancholic, of bantering sarcasm and profound emotion :

“Thrift, thrift, Horatio ! the funeral baked-meats
Did coldly furnish forth the marriage tables.
Would I had met my dearest foe in heaven
Or ever I had seen that day !”

This early passage seems to give the key-note of Hamlet’s temper, namely, soul-crushing grief in close alliance with an ironical, often a broad humour, which

can mock at despair. Profound life-weariness and suicidal desire indicate that from the first his emotions were morbid, and that the accusation of the King that he had

“A heart unfortified, a mind impatient,
An understanding simple and unschooled,”

was as true of the heart as it was false of the intellect. Yet his rapid recovery from brooding thoughts, and his entire self-possession when circumstances call upon him for action trivial or important, prove that his mind was not permanently off its poise. Profoundly reflective, capable of calling up thoughts and ideas of sense at will, of seeing his father “in his mind's eye,” he is equally capable of dismissing them and throwing himself into the present. How thoroughly self-possessed is he in his interview with his friend and fellow-student and the soldiers, and the reception he gives to their account of the apparition, by which they were “distilled almost to jelly by the act of fear;” how unhesitating his decision to see and speak to it, “though hell itself should gape!” and in the seventh scene, when actually waiting for the Ghost, what cool reflection in his comments on the wassail of the country. Yet he heard not the clock strike midnight, which the less pre-occupied sense of Marcellus had caught. His address to the Ghost,

“Angels and ministers of grace defend us!
Be thou a spirit of health or goblin damned?” &c.

is marked by a bold and cool reason, at a time when the awful evidences of the future make

“us fools of nature
So horridly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls.”

The courage of the Prince is of the noblest temper, and is made the more obvious from its contrast with the dread of his companions, who suggest that *it*, the neutral *thing*, as it has before been called, may tempt him to the summit of the cliff,

“And there assume some other horrible form,
Which might deprive your sovereignty of reason
And draw you into madness. Think of it :
The very place puts toys of desperation,
Without more motive, into every brain
That looks so many fathoms to the sea
And hears it roar beneath.”

But Hamlet is beyond all touch of fear.

“My fate cries out,
And makes each petty artery in this body
As hardy as the Nemean lion’s nerve.”

Horatio says, “He waxes desperate with imagination;” but his state really appears to be that of high-wrought yet reasonable courage. After following the Ghost to some distance he’ll “go no further”; but if this is said with any touch of fear it soon becomes pity: “Alas, poor Ghost!” And this, again, changes to revengeful resolution. He demands quickly to know the author of his father’s murder, that he

“May sweep to his revenge.”

But when the Ghost has told his terrible tale, and has disappeared, with the solemn farewell, "Adieu, adieu, adieu! remember me," the reaction comes. Then it is that Hamlet feels his sinews fail their function, and invokes them to bear him stiffly up; then he recognises a feeling of distraction in the globe of his brain; then he vows forgetfulness of all things but the motive of revenge. He becomes wild at the thoughts of the "smiling damned villain" who had wrought all this woe; and then, passing from the terrible to the trivial, he sets down in his tables a moral platitude:

"My tables ! meet it is, I set it down,
That one may smile, and smile, and be a villain ;
At least I am sure it may be so in Denmark."

We regard this climax of the terrible in the trivial, this transition of mighty emotion into lowness of action, as one of the finest psychological touches anywhere to be found in the poet. There is something like it in Tennyson's noble poem, *Maud*. When the hero has shot the brother of his mistress in a duel, he passes from intense passion to trivial observation :

"Strange that the mind, when fraught
With a passion so intense,
One would think that it well
Might drown all life in the eye,—
That it should, by being so overwrought,
Suddenly strike on a sharper sense
For a shell, or a flower, little things
Which else would have been past by !
And now I remember, I,

When he lay dying there,
I noticed one of his many rings,
(For he had many, poor worm,) and thought,
It is his mother's hair."

When the mind is wrought to an excessive pitch of emotion, the instinct of self-preservation indicates some lower mode of mental activity as the one thing needful. [When Lear's passions are wrought to the utmost, he says, "*I'll do! I'll do! I'll do!*" But he does nothing. Had he been able, like Hamlet, to have taken out his note-book, it would have been good for his mental health. Mark the effect of the restraint which Hamlet is thus able to put upon the tornado of his emotion. When the friends rejoin him, he is self-possessed enough swiftly to turn their curiosity aside. Horatio, indeed, remarks on his manner of doing so, and on his expression of the intention, for his own poor part, to go pray :

"These are but wild and whirling words, my lord."

Doubtless the excitement of manner would make them appear to be more deserving of this comment than they do in reading. Yet Hamlet knows thoroughly well what he is about, and proceeds to swear his friends to secrecy on his sword. The flippant comments on the awful underground voice of the Ghost "the fellow in the cellarage," "old mole," "truepenny," are another meeting point of the sublime and the ridiculous, or rather a voluntary refuge in the trivial from the awful presence of the terrible. They

are thoroughly true to the laws of our mental being. How often have men gone out of life upon the scaffold with a jest upon their lips. Even the just and cool-tempered Horatio, who takes fortune's buffets and rewards with equal thanks, is astounded and terrified at that underground voice which provokes but mocking retorts from the Prince. Horatio exclaims :

“O, day and night, but this is wondrous strange !”

That Hamlet's mockery was the unreal opposite to his true feeling, like the hysterical laughter of acute grief, is evident from his last earnest adjuration :

“ Rest, rest, perturbed spirit !”

How it is that the resolution of Hamlet to put on the guise of madness follows so quick upon the appearance of the Ghost to him, (indeed, while the spirit is yet present, though unseen, for the resolution is expressed before the final unearthly adjuration to swear,) we are unable to explain. His resolutions are not usually taken with such quick speed; and indeed the wings of his meditation, which he refers to as swift, commonly beat the air with long and slow strokes, the very reverse of Macbeth's vehement action, framed upon the principle “that the flighty purpose never is o'ertook, except the act goes with it.” It may, however, be said that the word “*perchance*” shews that Hamlet has not yet decided to act the madman when he swears his friends to secrecy.

“Never, so help you mercy !
How strange or odd soe'er I bear myself,
As I *perchance* hereafter shall think meet
To put an antic disposition on.”

And yet the intention must have resolve in it, even at this time, or he would not swear his friends in so solemn a manner to maintain inviolate the secret of his craft. The purport of Hamlet's feigned madness is not very obvious. It does not appear to have been needful to protect him, like that of the elder Brutus. It may be that under this disguise he hopes better to obtain proof of his uncle's guilt, and to conceal his real state of suspicion and vengeful gloom. Still more probable is it that Shakespeare adopted the feigned madness as an essential part of the old story on which the drama is founded.

The old history of Hamlet relates how he counterfeited the madman to escape the tyranny of his uncle Fengon, whose expedients resemble those in the drama which were resorted to by the King to ascertain whether his madness were counterfeited or not. The feigned madness, therefore, of the Prince was so leading a feature in the original history, that Shakespeare could by no means have omitted it, even if by doing so he would not have deprived himself of a magnificent canvass on which to display his psychological knowledge. As it stands however in the drama, the counterfeit madness would seem to bring Hamlet into more danger than security. What if the King had accepted his madness from the first, and

shut him up, as he might have justified himself in doing, in some strong castle. After the death of Polonius, the King says :

“ His liberty is full of threats to all ;
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas ! how shall this bloody deed be answer'd ?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd, and out of haunt,
This mad young man.”

And again—

“ How dangerous is it that this man goes loose.”

He puts not the strong law upon him indeed, as he says, because “ he's loved of the distracted multitude,” and because “ the Queen lives but in his eyes.” These motives may explain the King's conduct, but they do not shew that, in assuming the guise of madness, Hamlet was not incurring the risk of the limitation of his own freedom.

The first demonstration of the antic disposition he actually does put on, is made before his mistress, the fair Ophelia.

“ *Polonius.* How now, Ophelia ! what's the matter ?
Ophelia. O, my lord, my lord, I have been so affrighted !
Pol. With what, i' the name of God ?

Oph. My lord, as I was sewing in my closet,
Lord Hamlet, with his doublet all unbraced ;
No hat upon his head ; his stockings foul'd,
Ungarter'd, and down-gyved to his ankle ;
Pale as his shirt ; his knees knocking each other ;
And with a look so piteous in purport
As if he had been loosed out of hell
To speak of horrors,—he comes before me.

Pol. Mad for thy love ?

Oph. My lord, I do not know ;
But truly, I do fear it.

Pol. What said he ?

Oph. He took me by the wrist and held me hard ;
Then goes he to the length of all his arm ;
And, with his other hand thus o'er his brow,
He falls to such perusal of my face
As he would draw it. Long stay'd he so ;
At last, a little shaking of mine arm
And thrice his head thus waving up and down,
He raised a sigh so piteous and profound
That it did seem to shatter all his bulk
And end his being : that done, he lets me go :
And, with his head over his shoulder turn'd,
He seem'd to find his way without his eyes ;
For out o' doors he went without their help,
And, to the last, bended their light on me.

Pol. Come, go with me : I will go seek the king.
This is the very ecstasy of love,
Whose violent property fordoes itself
And leads the will to desperate undertakings
As oft as any passion under heaven
That does afflict our natures. I am sorry.
What, have you given him any hard words of late ?

Oph. No, my good lord, but, as you did command,
I did repel his letters and denied
His access to me."

We are at a loss to explain this part of Hamlet's conduct towards his sweet mistress, unless it be accepted as the sad pantomime of separation, love's mute farewell. That his noble and sensitive mind entertained a sincere love to the beautiful and virtuous girl, there can be no doubt. Surely it must have been this love which he thus refers to in that paroxysm of feeling at the close of the Ghost scene :

"Yea, from the table of my memory
I'll wipe away all trivial fond records."

Indeed, love is an autocratic passion not disposed to share the throne of the soul with other emotions of an absorbing nature. Hamlet, however, might feel his resolution, to wipe from his memory the trivial fond records of his love, strengthened into action by the conduct of Ophelia herself, who repelled his letters and denied his access, thus taking upon herself the pain and responsibility of breaking off the relationship in which she had stood to him, and in which with so keen a zest of pleasure she had sucked in the honey-music of his vows, and the reaction from which cost her so dear. In his interview with Ophelia, arranged by Polonius and the King, he speaks to her of his love as a thing of the past. That that love was ardent and sincere we learn from his passionate grief at the grave of his dead mistress, a grief which, on his own acknowledgment to his friend, we know to have been no acting, but the demonstration of which was due to the fact that he had forgot himself in the presence of Laertes, the bravery of whose grief had put him "into a towering passion." It is at this time, when he had forgot himself, that he exclaims with passionate vehemence,

"I loved Ophelia ; forty thousand brothers
Could not, with all their quantity of love,
Make up my sum."

That Hamlet's conduct to Ophelia was unfeeling, in thus forcing upon her the painful evidence of the insanity he had assumed, can scarcely be denied.

Hamlet, however, was no perfect character, and in the matter of his love there is no doubt he partook of the selfishness which is the common attribute of the passion wherever its glow is the warmest. His love was not of that delicate sentimental kind which would above all things fear to disturb the beatitude of its object, and feel its highest pleasure in acts of self-denial. It was rather of that kind which women best appreciate—an ardent passion, not a sentimental devotion; and hence its tinge of selfishness. Yet, having put on his antic disposition with the trappings and suits of madness, he might feel that the kindest act he could perform towards Ophelia would be to concur with her in breaking off their courtship. He might, indeed, have allowed others to tell her that he had gone mad, and have saved her a great fright and agitation of mind; but, under the circumstances, it cannot be considered unnatural that he should selfishly enough have rushed into her presence to take leave of her in the mad pantomime which she describes. His conduct to Ophelia is a mixture of feigned madness, of the selfishness of passion blasted by the cursed blight of fate, of harshness which he assumes to protect himself from an affection which he feels hostile to the present purpose of his life, and of that degree of real unsoundness, his unfeigned "weakness and melancholy," which is the subsoil of his mind.

In the following scene the King explains to Rosen-

crantz and Guildenstern the condition of the Prince in a manner which implies that at that time he entertained no doubt of the reality of his madness :

“Something have you heard
Of Hamlet’s transformation ; so I call it,
Since not the exterior nor the inward man
Resembles that it was. What it should be,
More than his father’s death, that thus hath put him
So much from the understanding of himself,
I cannot dream of.”

The King’s anxiety to ascertain “if aught to us unknown afflicts him thus,” indicates the unrest of his conscience, and the fear that some knowledge of his own great crime may lie at the bottom of his nephew’s inward and outward transformation. The same fearful anxiety shews itself immediately afterwards, when on the vain half-doting Polonius at the same time asserting that the Ambassadors from Norway are joyfully returned, and that he has found “the very cause of Hamlet’s lunacy,” the King exclaims, “Oh ! speak of that, that I do long to hear ;” thus bringing upon himself the retort courteous of the old man, that the news respecting Hamlet should be kept to follow the pressing business of the moment, as dessert fruit follows a feast.

From Polonius’s exposition of Hamlet’s madness, which, in a manner so contrary to his own axiom “that brevity is the soul of wit,” he dilates upon with such tediousness and empty flourishes of speech as to draw upon himself the rebuke of the Queen, “more

matter with less art," one would almost think that Shakespeare might have heard some lawyer, full of his quiddets and cases, endeavouring by the sophistry of abstract definitions to damage the evidence of some medical man to whose experience the actual concrete facts of insanity were matters of familiar observation, but whose verbal expression had more of pedantry than power :

"I will be brief: your noble son is mad :
Mad call I it; for, to define true madness,
What is't but to be nothing else but mad?"

In the following lines, the old man recognises madness to be a phenomenon, for which, like every other phenomenon, some cause or other must exist ; and, moreover, that madness is not in itself a distinct entity, something apart from the mind, but a *defect* in the mind.

"Mad let us grant him then : and now remains
That we find out the cause of this effect,
Or rather say, the cause of this defect,
For this effect defective comes by cause."

✖ Hamlet's letter to Ophelia is a silly-enough rhapsody ; of which, indeed, the writer appears conscious. It reads like an old letter antecedent to the events of the drama. The spirit it breathes is scarcely consistent with the intense life-weariness under which its author is first introduced to notice. The signature, however, is odd. "Thine evermore, most dear lady, whilst this *machine* is to him," and agrees with the

spirit of Hamlet's materialist philosophy, which is so strongly expressed in various parts of the play, and which forms so strange a contrast with the revelations from the spirit-world, of which he is made the recipient. The description which Polonius gives of the course of Hamlet's madness, after his daughter had locked herself from his resort and refused his messages and tokens, is vain and pedantic in its expression, but pregnant in meaning :

“ And he, repulsed—a short tale to make—
Fell into a sadness, then into a fast,
Thence to a watch, thence into a weakness,
Thence to a lightness, and, by this declension,
Into the madness wherein now he raves.”

Translated into the dulness of medical prose, the psychological opinion of the old courtier may be thus expressed. Disappointed and rejected in his ardent addresses to Ophelia, Hamlet became melancholy and neglected to take food ; the result of fasting was the loss of sleep ; loss of sleep and loss of food were followed by general weakness ; this produced a lightness or instability of the mental functions, which passed into insanity. The suggestion made by Polonius to test the soundness of his view, that the Prince loved his daughter and had fallen from his reason thereon, was plain and practical, namely, to arrange and to watch in ambuscade interviews between him and the persons most likely to excite his emotion. Moreover, Shakespeare was in some sort

bound to introduce these interviews, inasmuch as they formed an important part of the old history.

The Queen did not partake of the King's anxiety to ascertain the cause of her son's madness. When he tells her that Polonius

“Hath found
The head and source of all your son's distemper,”

she replies—

“I doubt it is no other but the main ;
His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage.”

Hamlet now for the first time appears in his feigned character. The feint is so close to nature, and there is underlying it withal so undeniable a substratum of morbid feeling, that in spite of ourselves, in opposition to our full knowledge that in his antic disposition Hamlet is putting on a part, we cannot from the first dispossess ourselves of the idea, that a mind fallen, if not from the sovereignty of reason, at least from the balance of its faculties, is presented to us. So much is undirection of mind blended with pregnant sense and apprehension, both however perverted from the obvious line of sane thought ; so much is the universal and caustic irony tinged with melancholic self-depreciation, and that longing for death which in itself alone constitutes a form of mental disease. In the various forms of partial insanity, it is a question of intricate science to distinguish between the portions of a man's conduct which result from the sound operations of mind, and those which result from disease.

Hamlet's own assertion, "I am but mad north-north-west : when the wind is southerly I know a hawk from a hand-saw," is pregnant with a psychological truth which has often engaged the most skilful and laborious investigation both of medical men and of lawyers. It has often been a question of life or death, of wealth or poverty, whether a criminal act was done, or a civil one performed, by a half-madman, when the mental wind was in the north-west of disease, or blowing from the sanatory south.

That in his actual unfeigned mental condition Hamlet is far from being in a healthy state of mind, he is himself keenly conscious, and acknowledges it to himself in his soliloquy upon the players :

“The spirit that I have seen
May be a devil : and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape ; yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me.”

Upon this actual weakness of mind and suicidal melancholy, combined with native humour and the biting irony into which his view of the world has sharpened it, is added the feigned form of insanity, the antic disposition wilfully put on, the dishevelled habiliments of person and wild converse. The characteristics of this feigned form are those of mania, not indeed violent, acute, and demonstrative, but mischievous, reckless, and wayward, and so mingled with flashes of native wit, and disguised by the

ground colour of real melancholy, shewing through the transparency of the feigned state, that Hamlet's character becomes one of the most interesting and complicated subjects of psychological study anywhere to be met with.

He is first introduced to us in his feigning condition with a fine touch to excite pity :

“*Queen.* But, look, where sadly the poor wretch comes reading.

Polonius. Do you know me, my lord?

Hamlet. Excellent well ; you are a fishmonger.”

Coleridge and others remark upon this, that Hamlet's meaning is, You are sent to fish out this secret. But we are not aware that fishmongers are in the habit of catching their fish. May it not rather be that a fishmonger was referred to as a dealer in perishable goods, and notoriously dishonest ; and thus to give point to the rejoinder—

“Then I would you were so honest a man.”

The writers who insist upon a profound meaning, even in Hamlet's most hurling words, have been mightily puzzled with the lines :

“For if the sun breed maggots in a dead dog, being a god kissing carrion,” &c.

Coleridge refers to “some thought in Hamlet's mind, contrasting Ophelia with the tedious old fool her father.” Is it not rather a wild taunt upon the old man's jealous suspicion of his daughter, as if he had said, since the sun causes conception in such

vile bodies, "let not your precious daughter walk in the sun."

Perhaps he only intended to convey to Polonius, by a contemptuous simile, the intimation that he cared not for the daughter, and thus to throw him off the scent of his quest. The intention to offend the tedious old fool, and thus to disembarrass himself of his presence, becomes still more obvious in the description of old age which immediately follows, "Slanders, sir," &c.

The point of the satire, and the absence of unreason, strikes Polonius.

"*Polonius.* Though this be madness, yet there is method in't. Will you walk out of the air, my lord?

Hamlet. Into my grave.

Pol. Indeed, that is out o' the air. How pregnant sometimes his replies are! a happiness that often madness hits on, which reason and sanity could not so prosperously be delivered of."

In this, again, the old man shews that though his wits may be somewhat superannuated, yet, either from reading or observation, he has no slight knowledge of mental disease.

What depth of melancholy and life-weariness is there not apparent in the conclusion of the interview.

"*Pol.* I will most humbly take my leave of you.

Ham. You cannot, sir, take from me anything that I will more willingly part withal: except my life, except my life, except my life!"

But when his old schoolfellows arrive, how frank

and hearty his greeting ; how entirely is all disguise for the moment thrown aside ! The noble and generous native nature is nowhere made more manifest than in his reception of these friends of his youth, men to whom he once adhered, neighbours to his youth and humour. Until his keen eye discovers that they have been “sent for,” and are mean instruments, if not spies, in the hands of the king, he throws off all dissimulation with them, greeting them with right hearty and cheerful welcome. Yet how soon his melancholy peers through the real but transient cheerfulness. The world is a prison, “in which there are many confines, wards, and dungeons ; Denmark being one of the worst.” If it is not so to his friend, yet is it so to him from thinking it so, for “there is nothing either good or bad, but thinking makes it so : to him it is a prison.” The real prison, then, is his own mind, as, in the contrary mental state, a prison is no prison, for

“Stone walls do not a prison make,
Nor iron bars a cage.”

Hamlet feels that he could possess perfect independence of circumstance if the mind were free.

“*Rosencrantz*. Why then, your ambition makes it one ; 'tis too narrow for your mind.

Hamlet. O God, I could be bounded in a nutshell and count myself a king of infinite space, were it not that I have bad dreams.”

The spies sound him further on the subject of ambition, thinking that disappointment at losing the

succession to the crown may be the true cause of his morbid state. In this intention they decry ambition : "it is but a shadow's shadow." Hamlet replies logically enough, that if ambition is but a shadow, something beyond ambition must be the substance from which it is thrown. If ambition represented by a King is a shadow, the antitype of ambition represented by a beggar must be the opposite of the shadow, that is, the substance. "Then are our beggars, bodies ; and our monarchs, and outstretch'd heroes, the beggars' shadows." He reduces the sophistry of his false friends to an absurdity, and closes the argument by declining to carry it further : "By my fay, I cannot reason." But Mr. Coleridge declares the passage to be unintelligible, and perhaps this interpretation of it may be too simple.

So far from being able to examine and recover the wind of Hamlet, his old schoolfellows are put by him to a course of questioning as to the motives of their presence, as to whether it is a free visitation of their own inclining, or whether they have been "sent for". Their want of skill in dissemblance and their weaker natures submit to him the secret that they had been "sent for," and the old "rights of fellowship," "the obligations of ever-preserved love," are immediately clouded by distrust : "Nay, then, I'll have an eye of you," he says. Yet notwithstanding he freely discloses to them the morbid state of his mind ; and, be it remarked, that in this exquisite picture* of life-

weariness, in which no image could be altered, no word omitted or changed, without obvious damage to its grand effect, he does not describe the maniacal state, the semblance of which he has put on before Ophelia and Polonius, but that morbid state of weakness and melancholy which he really suffers, of which he is thoroughly self-conscious, and which he avows in his first speech, before he has seen the Ghost :

"I have of late—but wherefore I know not—lost all my mirth, foregone all custom of exercise ; and indeed it goes so heavily with my disposition that this goodly frame, the earth, seems to me a sterile promontory, this most excellent canopy, the air, look you, this brave o'erhanging firmament, this majestic roof fretted with golden fire, why, it appears no other thing to me than a foul and pestilent congregation of vapours. What a piece of work is a man ! how noble in reason ! how infinite in faculty ! in form and moving how express and admirable ! in action how like an angel ! in apprehension how like a god ! the beauty of the world ! the paragon of animals ! And yet, to me, what is this quintessence of dust ? man delights not me : no, nor woman neither, though by your smiling you seem to say so."

How exquisitely is here portrayed the state of the reasoning melancholiac, (melancholia without delusion,) who sees all things as they are, but feels them as they are not. All cheerfulness fled, all motive for action lost, he becomes listless and inert. He still recognises the beauty of the earth and the magnificence of the heavens, but the one is a tomb, and the other a funereal pall. His reason still shews him the place of man, a little lower than the angels, but the sources of sentiment are dried up, and, although no man-

hater, he no longer derives pleasure from kindly affections. The waters of emotion are stagnant ; the pleasant places of the soul are sterile and desert.

✓ Hamlet is not slow to confess his melancholy, and indeed it is the peculiarity of this mental state, that those suffering from it seldom or never attempt to conceal it. A man will conceal his delusions, will deny and veil the excitement of mania, but the melancholiac is almost always readily confidential on the subject of his feelings. In this he resembles the hypochondriac, though not perhaps from exactly the same motive. The hypochondriac seeks for sympathy and pity ; the melancholiac frequently admits others to the sight of his mental wretchedness from mere despair of relief and contempt of pity.

Although Hamlet is ready to shew to his friends the mirror of his mind, he jealously hides the cause of its distortion. "But wherefore I know not" is scarcely consistent with the truth. In his first soliloquy, which we take to be the key-note of his real mental state, he clearly enough indicates the source of his wretchedness, which the Queen also, with a mother's insight, has not been slow to perceive :

" His father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage."

He is jealous that his friends should not refer his melancholy to love-sickness. The opinion propounded by Polonius, that he was mad for love, could not have escaped him ; a theory, of his malady, which would

be likely to wound his pride severely. Polonius had already made, in his presence, sundry aside observations on this point; and the significant smile of Rosencrantz at his observation, "Man delights not me," would be likely to stimulate the sleeping suspicion that he was set down as a brain-sick, rejected lover; and some annoyance at an attempt to explain his madness as the result of his rejection by Ophelia, may combine with the suspicion that he is watched to explain his harshness towards her in his subsequent interview with her.

How are we to understand his confession to the men he already distrusts, that in the appearance of his madness the King and Queen are deceived, except by his contempt for their discrimination, and his dislike to wear his antic disposition before all company?

When Polonius returns, he immediately puts on the full disguise, playing upon the old man's infirmities with the ironical nonsense about Jephtha, king of Israel, who had a daughter, etc., and skilfully leading Polonius by the nose on the scent of his own theory, "Still on my daughter."

When the players enter, however, he thoroughly throws off not only the antic counterfeit, but the melancholy reality of his disposition: he shakes his faculties together, and becomes perfectly master of himself in courtesy, scholarship, and solid sense. His retort to Polonius, who objects to the speech of the player as too long, seems a valuable hint of Shakes-

peare's own opinion respecting the bad necessity he felt to introduce ribald scenes into his plays: "It shall to the barber's, with your beard. Prithee, say on: he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps." A noble sentiment in homely phrase is that in which he marks the right motive of behaviour towards inferiors, and indeed towards all men. To Polonius's assurance that he will use the players according to their desert, the princely reply is—

"God's bodykins, man, much better: use every man after his desert, and who should 'scape whipping? Use them after your own honour and dignity: the less they deserve, the more merit is in your bounty."

Although he freely mocks the old lord chamberlain himself, he will not permit others to do so. His injunction to the player, "Follow that lord, and look you mock him not," not only indicates that the absurdities of Polonius are glaring, but that there is less real malice in Hamlet's heart towards the old man than he assumes the appearance of.

Hamlet decides upon the use he will make of the players with a promptitude that shews that his resolve, "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," is but the inactivity of an over-reflective melancholic mind, and that there is energy enough in him to seize some forms of opportunity.

Hamlet's soliloquy, "O, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" resembles, with a difference, the one following his interview with the Captain: "How all

occasions do inform against me." The latter one, after he has obtained satisfactory proof of his uncle's guilt, is by far the least passionate and vehement, justifying in some degree the remark of Schlegel, that "in the last scenes the main action either stands still or appears to retrograde." There is, however, an important distinction between these two soliloquies. The passionate outburst of the first has been stimulated by emotional imitation. The feigned passion of the player has touched the most sensitive chord of feeling, and given occasion to the vehemence of his angry self-rebuke. The account of the soldier's temper, "greatly to find quarrel in a straw when honour's at the stake," sets him calmly to reflect and philosophize upon the motives of action. In these two soliloquies we have to some extent Shakespeare's own exposition of Hamlet's natural character, and the motives of his conduct.

"The whole," says Schlegel, "was intended to shew that a consideration which would exhaust all the relations and possible consequences of a deed to the very limits of human foresight, cripples the power of acting." In this tragedy of thought we have delineated a highly sensitive, reflecting, self-introspective mind, weak and melancholic, sorrow-stricken and life-weary. In a manner so awful that it might shake the soundest mind, this man is called upon to take away the life of a king and a relative for a crime of which there exists no actual proof.

Surely Hamlet is justified in pausing to weigh his motives and his evidence, in concluding not to act upon the sole dictation of a shadowy appearance, who may be the devil tempting his "weakness and his melancholy;" of resolving to "have grounds more relative than this," before he deliberately commits himself to an act of revenge which, even had the proof of his uncle's crime been conclusive and irrefragable, would have been repulsive to his inmost nature. Hamlet's indecision to act, and his over-readiness to reflect, are placed beyond the reach of critical discovery by his own analytical motive-hunting, so eloquently expressed in the abstruse reasoning in which he indulges. Anger and hatred against his uncle, self-contempt for his own irresolution, inconsistent as he feels it with the courage of which he is conscious; disgust at his own angry excitement, and doubts of the testimony upon which he is yet dissatisfied that he has not acted, present a state of intellectual and emotional conflict perfectly consistent with the character and the circumstances. If Hamlet had had as much faith in the Ghost as Macbeth had in the Weird Sisters, he would have struck without needing further evidence. If he had been a man of action, whose firstlings of the heart are those of the hand, he would have struck in the earliest heat of his revenge. He feels while he questions, that it is not true that he is "pigeon-liver'd, and lacks gall to make oppression bitter;" but he does lack ~~that~~ resolution

which "makes mouths at the invisible event;" he does make "I would, wait upon, I will :" he does hesitate and procrastinate, and examine his motives, and make sure to his own mind of his justification, and allow us to see the painful labour of a noble and sensitive being struggling to gain an unquestionable conviction of the right thing to do, in circumstances most awry and difficult ; ~~He~~ he does feel balancing motives, and painfully hear the ring of the yes and no in his head.

"Che sì, e nò nel capo mi ienzona."

Shall we think the less nobly of him because his hand is not ready to shed kindred blood ; because, gifted with God-like discourse of reason, he does look before and after ; because he does not take the law in his own hands upon his oppressor until he has obtained conclusive evidence of his guilt ; that he seeks to make sure he is the natural justiciar of his murdered father, and not an assassin instigated by hatred and selfish revenge ?

The report given to the King and Queen by the young courtiers is conceived to hide their failure in the mission of inquiry. The Prince, they say, "does confess he feels himself distracted," while he refuses to yield to them the cause :

"But, with a crafty madness, keeps aloof,
When we would bring him on to some confession
Of his true state."

He behaves

“Most like a gentleman ;”
“But with much forcing of his disposition,”

and he is falsely stated to have been “niggard of question,” but “most free in his reply.”

They must, however, have been surprised to hear the condition in which they found their friend described by the King, as “turbulent and dangerous lunacy,” since, up to this time, this is an untrue description of Hamlet’s state, whatever cause the King may subsequently have to apply it, when the death of Polonius makes him feel that Hamlet’s “liberty is full of threats to all.” The expression used by the King, that Hamlet “puts on this confusion,” would seem to point to a suspicion, even at this early time, that his madness is but counterfeit. The Queen, however, appears to accept its reality, and, notwithstanding all the arguments of Polonius, she adheres to her first opinion of its cause. She doth *wish*, indeed, that Ophelia’s “good beauties be the happy cause of Hamlet’s wildness ;” since, if so, she entertains the hope that her virtues may bring the remedy. It seems here implied that the King and Queen have been made aware of Ophelia’s love for Hamlet ; and both in this speech of the Queen, and in the one she makes over Ophelia’s grave,

“I hoped thou shouldst have been my Hamlet’s wife,”
it appears that the remedy by which the Queen at

this time hopes to attain his recovery to "his wonted way again," is by his marriage. This understanding, however, or arrangement, is nowhere expressed; and indeed, although the Queen may desire to think with Polonius respecting the cause and nature of her son's malady,^{her} mother's knowledge and woman's tact lead her conviction nearer to the truth, when she avows the real cause to be "his father's death, and our o'erhasty marriage." ↗

The soliloquy which follows, "To be, or not to be," is one of the most exquisite pieces of poetic self-communing ever conceived. Imbued with a profoundly melancholy view of human life, which is relieved by no gleam of cheerfulness, illumined by no ray of hope, the mind of the unhappy Prince dwells with longing desire, not on a future and happier state of existence, but on annihilation. He wishes to end the troubles of life in a sleep without a dream, and is restrained alone from seeking it by the apprehension of

"What dreams may come
When we have shuffled off this mortal coil;"

by the fear, in fact, of a future state, in which the calamities of this life may be exchanged for others more enduring, in the undiscovered country of the future. This "dread of something after death" scarcely deserves the name of conscience which he applies to it. The fear of punishment is the lowest motive for virtuous action, and is far removed in its nature from the inward principle of doing right for its own sake.

The word, however, does not seem to be here applied in its higher sense, as the arbiter of right, but rather in that of reflective meditation. It is this that makes "cowards of us all." It is this that prevents Hamlet seeking his own rest in the annihilation he longs for. It is by this also that his hand is withheld from the act of wild justice and revenge upon which his mind sits on brood. It is thus that he accurately describes the *timbre* of his own mind, so active to think, so inert to act, so keen to appreciate the evils of life, so averse to take any active part against them :

"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all ;
And thus the native hue of resolution
Is sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought,
And enterprises of great pith and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry,
And lose the name of action."

The motive against suicide here adduced is undoubtedly a mean and fallacious one. It is mean, because it is cowardly ; the coward want of patience manfully to endure the evils of this mortal life being kept in check by the coward fear of future punishment. It is fallacious, because it balances the evils of this life against the apprehended ones of the future ; therefore when, in the judgment of the sorely afflicted, the weight of present evils more than counterpoises those which their amount of religious faith may point to in the threatening future, the argument here advanced would justify suicide. There is nothing in which men differ more than in the various degrees

with which they are endowed with the courage of fortitude and the courage of enterprise; and it is certain that of two men equally groaning and sweating under a weary life, and oppressed by the same weight of calamity, if solely actuated by the reasoning here employed by Hamlet in the contemplation of suicide, one would have the courage to endure the present, and the other would have the courage to face the perils of the future. Courage has been described as the power to select the least of two evils; the evil of pain and death, for instance, rather than that of shame. If this be so, it must yet be admitted that either one of two given evils may be the greatest to different men; and courage may urge one man to fight and another to flee, either in the vulgar wars of Kings and Kaisars, or in the more earnest trials of the battle of life. The converse of the proposition must also be true, and cowardice may either make us stand by our arms or basely desert. The terrible question of suicide, therefore, is not to be thus solved; indeed the only motive against suicide which will stand the test is that which Hamlet in his first speech indicates, namely, obedience to the law of God; that obedience which, in the heaviest calamities, enables the Christian to "be patient and endure"; that obedience which, in the most frantic desire to put off this mortal coil, can withhold the hand by this one consideration, that

"The Eternal hath set His canon 'gainst self-slaughter."

The motives made use of by Hamlet in his earlier

and later contemplation of suicide, indicate his religious and his philosophic phase of character. Faith in the existence of a God, and of a future state of existence, is so ingrained in his mind that it powerfully influences his conduct, and constantly turns up to invalidate, if not to refute, that sceptical philosophy with which he is indoctrinated, and which leads him so constantly to trace the changes of matter, as in

“Imperious Cæsar, dead and turn'd to clay,
Might stop a hole to keep the wind away.”

This, perhaps, was the philosophy which Horatio and he had learned at Wittenburg, the fallacy of which the Ghost had seemed at first to prove. Yet it is strange how entirely Hamlet appears at times to have forgotten the Ghost and its revelations. The soliloquy “To be, or not to be” is that of a man to whom any future state of existence is a matter of sincere doubt. He reasons as one of those who would not be persuaded “though one rose from the dead.”

After the soul-harrowing recital made to him by the perturbed spirit of his father, in which the secrets of the purgatorial prison-house are not indeed unfolded, but in which they are so broadly indicated that no man who had seen so much of the “eternal blazon” of the spirit-world could find a corner in his soul for the concealment of a sceptical doubt, after this, the soliloquy “To be, or not to be” presumes either an entire forgetfulness of the awful revelation which had been made to him, or the existence of a

state of mind so overwhelmed with suicidal melancholy as to be incapable of estimating testimony. Now it is well enough known that the most complete sensorial and intellectual proofs go for nothing when opposed to the stubborn strength of a morbid emotion ; and when Hamlet reasons thus upon the future life, and hunts matter through its transmigrations with sceptical intent, it must be accepted as the result of the perverted instinct of self-preservation, which made him desire nothing so much as simple unconditional annihilation.

In his interview with the much-enduring Ophelia which follows the soliloquy, Hamlet has been accused of unworthy harshness. Two considerations will tend to modify, though not altogether to remove, this judgment. The reader is aware that Ophelia entertains the fondest love towards Hamlet ; but he, ignorant of this, only knows that, after accepting the tender of his affections, she has repulsed him with every appearance of heartless cruelty. He feels her to be the cause of his “pangs of despised love ;” yet he at first addresses her in a manner indicating his own faithfulness and fond appreciation of all her goodness and virtue, as if he could best approach Heaven through her gracious intercession :

“The fair Ophelia ! Nymph, in thy orisons
Be all my sins remember’d.”

What follows is so opposed to the tenderness of this

greeting, that we are compelled to assume that he sees through the snare set for him ; and that in avoiding it he works himself into one of those ebullitions of temper to which he is prone. He sees that Ophelia is under the constraint of other presence, as what keen-sighted lover would not immediately distinguish whether his mistress, in whatever mood she may be, feels herself alone with him, or under the observation of others ? He has before shewn his repugnance to the idea that he is love-sick mad. He knows that Polonius thus explains his conduct ; and his harshness to Ophelia is addressed to Polonius, and to any others who may be in hiding, more than to Ophelia herself. Yet the harshest words, and those most unfit to be used to any woman, are the true reflex of the morbid side of his mind, which passion and suspicion have cast into the bitterest forms of expression. The true melancholy and the counterfeit madness are strangely commingled in this scene. The latter is shewn by disjointed exclamations and half-reasonings. "Ha, ha ! are you honest ?" "Are you fair ?" "I did love you once." "I loved you not" etc., and by the wild form in which the melancholy is here cast. "Get thee to a nunnery : why wouldest thou be a breeder of sinners ?" "What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven !" "Where's your father ?" Ophelia tells a white lie. "At home, my lord." Hamlet knows better, and sends a random shaft into his ambuscade. "Let the doors be shut

upon him, that he may play the fool nowhere but in his own house."

"*Hamlet.* Get thee to a nunnery : why wouldst thou be a breeder of sinners ? I am myself indifferent honest ; but yet I could accuse me of such things that it were better my mother had not borne me : I am very proud, revengeful, ambitious, with more offences at my beck than I have thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or time to act them in. What should such fellows as I do crawling between earth and heaven ? We are arrant knaves, all ; believe none of us. Go thy ways to a nunnery. Where's your father ?"

"*Ham.* If thou dost marry, I'll give thee this plague for thy dowry : be thou as chaste as ice, as pure as snow, thou shalt not escape calumny. Get thee to a nunnery, go : farewell. Or, if thou wilt needs marry, marry a fool ; for wise men know well enough what monsters you make of them. To a nunnery, go, and quickly too. Farewell.

Ophelia. O heavenly powers, restore him !

Ham. I have heard of your paintings too, well enough ; God has given you one face, and you make yourselves another : you jig, you amble, and you lisp, and nick-name God's creatures, and make your wantonness your ignorance. Go to, I'll no more on't ; it hath made me mad. I say, we will have no more marriages : those that are married already, all but one, shall live ; the rest shall keep as they are. To a nunnery, go."

Partly dictated by jealous fear that Ophelia may solace her pain with some other lover, it is yet an attempt to wean from himself any fondness which may remain. The burden is, Grieve not for me, but do not marry another. The latter part of the speech is directed to the Queen in ambush.

What exquisite pathos ! what wail of despairing love in Ophelia's lament over the ruin of her lover's

mind ! What fine discrimination of the excellencies marred ! What forgetfulness of self in the grief she feels for him ! Not for her own loss, but for his fall, is she “of ladies most deject and wretched,” although it is the dying swan-song of her own sanity.

“O, what a noble mind is here o’erthrown !
The courtier’s, soldier’s, scholar’s, eye, tongue, sword ;
The expectancy and rose of the fair state,
The glass of fashion and the mould of form,
The observed of all observers, quite, quite down !
And I, of ladies most deject and wretched,
That suck’d the honey of his music vows,
Now see that noble and most sovereign reason,
Like sweet bells jangled, out of tune and harsh ;
That unmatch’d form and feature of blown youth
Blasted with ecstasy : O, woe is me,
To have seen what I have seen, see what I see !”

The King, in the meanwhile, whose keenness of vision has not been dimmed by the mists of affection, like that of Ophelia, nor by self-conceit, like that of Polonius, has detected the prevalence of melancholy and sorrow in the assumed wildness of the Prince :

“Love ! his affections do not that way tend ;
Nor what he spake, though it lack’d form a little,
Was not like madness. There’s something in his soul,
O’er which his melancholy sits on brood ;
And I do doubt the hatch and the disclose
Will be some danger.”

Polonius thinks well of the King’s scheme to get Hamlet out of the way by pretext of benefiting his health by change of scene, though with senile obstinacy he still holds to his opinion that the com-

mencement of his grief sprung from neglected love. To test this further he proposes the interview with the Queen, who is to be round with her son, and whose conference Polonius will hear. If this scheme fails, let him be sent to England without delay, or be put into confinement.

In his speech to the players, Hamlet's attention, abstracted for a moment from the view of his sorrows, leaves his mind free from the clouds of melancholy, and permits him to display his powerful and sarcastic intelligence without let or hindrance. His innate nobleness of mind is not less clearly pourtrayed in the conversation with Horatio which immediately follows. The character of this judicious and faithful follower, as it is manifested throughout the piece, and especially as it is here pourtrayed by Hamlet himself, forms a pleasing contrast to that of his princely friend. The one passionate in emotion, inert in action; the other cool in temper, prompt in conduct. The maxim *noscitur a sociis* may be narrowed to the closer and truer one, "Shew me your friend, and I'll tell your mind;" and in a true and deep friendship there will always be found much uniformity of sentiment, though it may be, and indeed often is, combined with great diversity of temperament. Deep friendship rarely exists between persons whose emotional tendencies closely resemble. A true friend is generally chosen in some contrast of disposition, as if the basis of this rare and noble affection were the longing to remedy

the imperfections of one's nature by complementing ourselves with those good qualities of another in which we are deficient.

Before this time Hamlet has confided to his friend the terrible secret of the Ghost's message, the truth of which he proposes to test by the scheme of the play, and thus to sting the conscience and unkennel the occult guilt of his uncle.

When the court enter, Hamlet puts on his antics in his ironical half-reasonings with the King and Polonius, and his banter with Ophelia. The manners and playhouse licence of the time explain the broad indelicacy of the latter; but that he so publicly indulged it may be accepted as proof of his desire to mark his indifference to the woman who had, as he thought, heartlessly jilted him, and whose love he had reason to think had been "as brief as the posy of a ring."

As the play within the play draws to its climax, Hamlet becomes so excited and reckless that it is a wonder he does not spoil his scheme by exposing it to the King, who, on the point of taking the alarm, exclaims, "Have you heard the argument? Is there no offence in't?" He is little likely to be reassured by Hamlet's disclaimer, "They poison in jest; no offence i' the world."

When the crisis has come, and the King's guilt has been unkenneled, and Hamlet is again left alone with Horatio, before whom he would not feign, his

real excitement borders so closely upon the wildest antics of the madness he has put on in craft, that there is little left to distinguish between the two. He quotes senseless doggerel, will join "a fellowship in a cry of players," will "take the Ghost's word for a thousand pound," and is altogether in that state of flippant merriment which men sometimes assume to defend themselves from deep emotion; as they sometimes jest in the face of physical horrors or mental woe. It is like the hysterical laughter of intense emotion, though not quite. It is partly that levity of mind which succeeds intense strain of thought and feeling, as naturally as it is to yawn and stretch after one long-continued wearisome position. This mood of unfeigned flippancy continues after the re-entrance of his treacherous school friends, well expressing its tone in the doggerel,

"For if the king like not the comedy,
Why then, belike,—he likes it not, perdy."

To the courtier's request, that he will put his "dis-course into some frame," he rejoins, "I am tame, sir: pronounce." He affects a display of politeness, but the "courtesy is not of the right breed." To the entreaty to give "a wholesome answer" to the Queen's message, he affords an indication that some at least of his wildness is also not of the right breed, since he appeals to it as a reality. "Make you a wholesome answer; my wit's diseased." Of a disease, however, which leaves the wit too quick for their play. He

sees through them thoroughly. To the silly-enough inquiry of Rosencrantz, "Good my lord, what is your cause of distemper? you do surely but bar the door of your own liberty, if you deny your griefs to your friend;" he gives answer, laying bare the selfish motives of the questioner, "Sir, I lack advancement." Suppressing irony, he becomes for a moment serious with them: "Why do you go about to recover the wind of me, as if you would drive me into a toil?" And then that lesson of sarcastic earnestness, to prove that he knew the breed of their friendship and solicitude for him:

"Why, look you now, how unworthy a thing you make of me! You would play upon me; you would seem to know my stops; you would pluck out the heart of my mystery; you would sound me from my lowest note to the top of my compass: and there is much music, excellent voice, in this little organ; yet cannot you make it speak. S'blood, do you think I am easier to be played on than a pipe? Call me what instrument you will, though you can fret me, yet you cannot play upon me."

The veil which he deigns to put on before these mean and treacherous ephemera of the court is of the thinnest counterfeit; but with Polonius the mental antics are more pronounced, for with him he rejoices in spiteful mischief, as when the tiresome old man "fools him to the top of his bent." "Do you see yonder cloud?" etc. The soliloquy immediately following fully proves how thoroughly on the surface all this flippancy is. The dread purpose is gather-

ing to action, and the mind was never more sad than all this while, under the mask of intellectual buf-
foonery, for 'tis even now he

“could drink hot blood,
And do such bitter business as the day
Would quake to look on.”

At this juncture the King re-appears, with his mind thoroughly made up on the point that Hamlet has in him something dangerous, if his doubts are not also solved on the point of his madness. The play which has discovered the King to Hamlet, must also have discovered his knowledge of the murder to the King. Before this time Claudius thinks his nephew's madness must be watched, and although he fears that the hatch and disclose of his melancholy will be some danger, it does not appear that he yet proposes to send him to England with purpose against his life. After the play, and before the death of Polonius, the King's apprehension is excited :

“I like him not, nor stands it safe with us
To let his madness range.”

“The terms of our estate may not endure
Hazard so dangerous as doth hourly grow
Out of his lunacies.”

“We will fetters put upon this fear,
Which now goes too free-footed.”

Although the King speaks to the courtiers of dispatching their commission to England forthwith, and desires them to arm to this speedy voyage, it can scarcely be that at this time he is guilty of that

treacherous design on Hamlet's life which he unfolds after the death of Polonius. The agony of repentance for his past crime, so vehemently expressed in the soliloquy, "O, my offence is rank," etc., appears scarcely consistent with the project of a new murder on his mind. The King has no inconsiderable mental endowments and moral courage, though personally he is a coward and a sottish debauchee. But, notwithstanding this personal cowardice, we must accept Hamlet's abuse of him, in contrast to the manly perfection of his father, as applying rather to his appearance, and to his deficiency in those soldier-like qualities which would command respect in a nation of warriors, than to his intellect. Although the King holds fencing, that quality of Laertes which hath plucked envy from Hamlet, "as of the unworthiest siege;" although a plotter, "a cut-purse of the empire and the rule," and, according to the description of his son-in-law, altogether a contemptible person, intellectually he is by no means despicable. Yet that burst of eloquent remorse seems too instinct with the longing for real repentance to have been uttered by this cowardly fratricide, who even in the act of prayer is juggling with heaven itself. We feel no pity for the scheming hypocrite, in spite of the anguish which wrings from him the cry :

"O wretched state ! O bosom, black as death !
O limed soul, that, struggling to be free,
Art more engaged!"

If in that fine appreciation of mercy and of Heaven's justice in which

“There is no shuffling, there the action lies
In his true nature ; and we ourselves compell'd,
Even to the teeth and forehead of our faults,
To give in evidence,”

if these thoughts appear too just to be expressed by so foul a mouth, even as the polished wisdom of the precepts given to Laertes appears inconsistent with the senile incapacity of Polonius, we must somewhat attribute it to that lavish wealth of power and beauty which we find only in Shakespeare, who sometimes in wanton extravagance sets pearls in pinchbeck, and strews diamonds on the sanded floor, who pours nectar into the wooden cup, and feeds us with ambrosia when we should have been satisfied with bread.

It will scarcely be denied by those who have escaped that blindness of bigotry, which the intense admiration Shakespeare naturally excites in those who study him closely accounts for and excuses, that he sometimes gives to one of his personages an important speech, somewhat out of harmony with the general delineation of the character ; his characters being in other parts so thoroughly natural and consistent, that he is able to do this without injury to the general effect. But when he does so, what breadth of wisdom and beauty of morality does not the discursive caprice afford !

The soliloquy of the King, a homily in thirty lines, on the mercy and justice of God, and the utter folly of hypocrisy in prayer, is followed by the speech of Hamlet, "Now might I do it pat," etc., containing sentiments which Johnson designates as atrocious.

We are inclined to think that in writing both this speech and the King's soliloquy, Shakespeare had in mind the intention of conveying instruction on the nature and office of prayer, rather than that of developing his plot. From the King's speech we learn that the mercy of the sweet Heavens is absolutely unlimited, that the force of prayer is two-fold to bring aid and pardon, that the condition of forgiveness is a true repentance which does not shame justice by retaining the offence, and the worthlessness of word prayers. We know that the prayers of the King are hollow and unavailing, but so does not Hamlet, who is made to bear testimony to the all-sufficient efficacy of prayer, since it can save so damnable a villain as his uncle. His father had been

"Cut off even in the blossom of his sin,
Unhouse'd, disappointed, unanel'd."

"He took my father grossly, full of bread ;
With all his crimes broad blown, as flush as May ;"

so that his audit with Heaven was likely to stand heavy with him. Villain as his uncle was,

"Bloody bawdy villain !
Remorseless, treacherous, lecherous, kindless villain !"

still there was that in prayer which would fit and

season him for his passage to the future life, and, if taken "in the purging of his soul," why, "so he goes to Heaven."

Both of these speeches seem to have been written to impress most forcibly the efficacy of sincere and prayerful repentance. It was to the religious sentiment that the revival of play-acting was due; but when Shakespeare wrote, it had already ceased to be a common subject of theatrical representation, and (*Measure for Measure* perhaps excepted) in no other of his dramas has it been very prominently brought forward. The motive for delay assigned in this speech was certainly neither Christian nor merciful. Yet the act itself was merciful, and the more horrid bent with which Hamlet excused his inaction was but speculative. A conscience yet unsatisfied that his purposed deed was a just and righteous one, rather than a cruel thirst for the full measure of revenge, appears to have been Hamlet's real motive for delay at this period. His opportunities for assassinating the King, had he so desired, were certainly not limited to this moment, yet he forbore to use them, until his uncle's murderous treachery towards himself at length resolved him to quit accounts with his own arm. Moreover, it is the Romanist theology which is represented in this play, and its doctrines must be taken into consideration in judging of the excuse which Hamlet makes for delaying to kill the King, until "about some act what has no relish of

salvation in't." The future state of punishment is represented as a terminable purgatory; Hamlet's father is doomed "for a certain time" to fast in fires until his crimes are burnt and purged away. Hamlet swears by the rood, and he lays the stress of a catholic upon the incest of the Queen in becoming her husband's brother's wife. At the funeral of Ophelia it is the catholic ritual which is in abeyance. Great command has overswayed *the order* of priory or abbey, where the funeral is taking place. The priest says "her death was doubtful;" and,

"We should profane the service of the dead
To sing a *requiem* and such rest to her
As to peace-parted souls."

In this passage the Romanist idea is for the third time produced, that the soul's future depends upon the mode of leaving this life, rather than upon the manner in which this life has been spent.

In the interview with his mother, the idea of Hamlet's profound affection for her has been most skilfully conveyed in the painful effort with which he endeavours to make her conscious of her position, to set before her a glass where she may see her inmost part, to speak daggers to her, to be cruel, but not unnatural. From the speech,

"A bloody deed! almost as bad, good mother,
As kill a king, and marry with his brother,"

it would appear that he entertained some suspicions

of his mother's complicity in the murder of his father, and that these words were tentative to ascertain whether her conscience was sore on that side. From what follows we must suppose this suspicion allayed. The readiness with which Hamlet seizes the opportunity to strike the blow which kills Polonius, under the belief that he strikes the King, is of a piece with a character too meditative to frame and follow a course of action, yet sometimes sudden and rash in action when the opportunity presents itself. *The rapid action with which he utilizes the players, with which he circumvents his treacherous schoolfellows, with which he at last kills the King, resembles the quick blow which sends to his account "the wretched, rash, intruding fool," whom he mistakes for his betters. So long as resolution can be "sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought," so long as time is allowed for any scruple to be listened to, he thinks too precisely on the event, and lives to say the thing's to do. But let the opportunity of action present itself, and he is quick to seize it, as he would have been dilatory in seeking it. **It is the meditative, inactive man, who often seizes opportunities for action, or what he takes for such, with the greatest eagerness. Unable to form and follow a deliberate course of action, he is too ready to lend his hand to circumstances, as they arise without his intervention. Sometimes he fails miserably, as in the death of Polonius; sometimes he succeeds, as when he finds occasion to praise that rash-

ness, which too often stands him in the place of steady purpose.

“Rashly,
And praised be rashness for it, let us know,
Our indiscretion sometimes serves us well,
When our deep plots do pall : and that should teach us
There's a divinity that shapes our ends,
Rough-hew them how we will.”

The comments of Hamlet upon the death of Polonius, if they had been calmly spoken by a man holding the even tenor of his way through life, would have deserved the moralist's reprobation quite as much as his speech over the praying King. To us they tell of that groundwork of unsound emotion upon which the almost superhuman intellectual activity of the character is founded. In Hamlet's life-weary, melancholy state, with his attention fixed elsewhere, such an event as the death of Polonius would have a very different effect to that which it would have had upon so sensitive and noble a mind, if its condition were healthy. His attention at the time is concentrated upon one train of ideas, his feelings are preoccupied, his sympathies somewhat indurated to the sufferings of others, and his comments upon them are likely, therefore, to appear unfeeling.

The Queen indeed, with affectionate invention, represents to the King the very opposite view. She says “he weeps for what he's done ;” his natural grief shewing itself pure in his very madness, like a precious ore in a base mineral. It is, however, not thus that

Hamlet is represented "to draw toward an end" with the father of his mistress, and to deposit "the carrion."

The ideas which almost exclude from Hamlet's thoughts the wrong he has done Polonius now become expressed with a vehemence inconsistent with sound mind. The manner in which he dallies with the idea of his mother's incest, using images of the grossest kind—the blighting comparison of that mildewed ear, his uncle, with his warrior father—the vehement denunciation of his uncle—"a murderer and a villain, a slave," "a vice of kings, a cutpurse of the empire and the rule," "a king of shreds and patches," "a toad," "a bat, a gib,"—all this verifies his own sneer on himself, that while he cannot act he can curse "like a very drab." Although he succeeds in his purpose of turning the Queen's eyes into her very soul, and shewing black and grained spots there, it must be admitted that this excessive vehemence is not merely so much out of the belt of rule as might be justified by the circumstances, but that it indicates a morbid state of emotion; and never does Hamlet appear less sanc than when he is declaring

"That I essentially am not in madness,
But mad in craft."

Hamlet's behaviour in the second Ghost scene is more excited and terrified than in the former one. The apparition comes upon him when in a less firm and prepared mood. The first interview is expected, and

each petty artery is knit to hardihood. The second is wholly unexpected, and comes upon him at a time when his mind is wrought to passionate excitement ; and it is far easier for the mind to pass from one state of emotional excitement to the opposite, than from a state of self-possessed tranquillity to one of excitement. It is thus with Hamlet's rapid transition from the passionate vehemence, with which he is describing his uncle's crimes and qualities, to the ecstasy of fear, which seizes him when his father's shade once more stands before him. The sting of conscience also adds force to the emotion of awe. He has neglected the dread command, the sacred behest, of the buried majesty of Denmark. With unworthy doubts and laggard procrastination, his purpose has become almost blunted. His doubts, however, have now vanished ; he no longer entertains the thought that "the spirit he has seen may be the devil;" he no longer questions whether it is "a spirit of health, or goblin damned;" but accepts the appearance implicitly as the gracious figure of his father. Since the first appearance of the unearthly visitant he has caught the conscience of the fratricide King, and unkenneled the dark secret of his guilt ; therefore it is that at this second visitation the feeling of awe is unmixed with doubt and that touch of defiance which is so perceptible on the former one. Since then, moreover, his nerves have been rudely shaken ; he has lived in the torture of extreme anxiety and

profound grief, and the same cause naturally produces upon him a greater effect. Even while he is vehemently railing at the criminal whom he had been called upon to punish, the Ghost appears.

"Hamlet. How is it with you, lady?

Queen. Alas, how is't with you,
That you do bend your eye on vacancy
And with the incorporal air do hold discourse?
Forth at your eyes your spirits wildly peep ;
And, as the sleeping soldiers in the alarm,
Your bedded hair, like life in excrements,
Starts up, and stands an end. O gentle son,
Upon the heat and flame of thy distemper
Sprinkle cool patience."

"Queen. This is the very coinage of your brain :
This bodiless creation ecstasy
Is very cunning in.

Ham. Ecstasy !
My pulse, as yours, doth temperately keep time,
And makes as healthful music : it is not madness
That I have utter'd : bring me to the test,
And I the matter will re-word ; which madness
Would gambol from. Mother, for love of grace,
Lay not that flattering unction to your soul,
That not your trespass, but my madness speaks :
It will but skin and film the ulcerous place,
Whilst rank corruption, mining all within,
Infects unseen."

It is in this agony of awe that he calls upon the heavenly guards to save and protect him, that his eyes wildly indicate alarm, that his bedded hairs stand on end, that the heat and flame of his distemper appear to lack all patience. It is in this agony of awe that he feels himself so unnerved, that he entreats his father not to look upon him, lest he should

be thus rendered incapable of all action, and only live to weep. During the brief space of the Ghost's second appearance, Hamlet's extremity of fear can scarcely be overrated. Still it is the sentiment of awe, not of that horror which petrifies Macbeth in the banquet scene. Moreover, in Hamlet the reaction tends to tears, in Macbeth it is to rage.

There is something exquisitely touching in the regard which the poor Ghost shews towards the frail partner of his earthly state. The former injunction

“Taint not thy mind, nor let thy soul contrive
Against thy mother aught”

had scarcely been obeyed ; and now the entreaty

“O, step between her and her fighting soul”

is a fine touch of the warrior's heart, whose rough and simple silhouette is thrown upon the page in those two lines of unsurpassable descriptive terseness,

“So frowned he once, when in an angry parlé
He smote the sleded Polack on the ice.”

The Ghost, indeed, is a character as never ghost was before. So far from being a neutral *it*, a *thing*, the buried majesty of Denmark is now highly personal in his simple Sclavonic majesty. Though he instigates revenge in the old viking, rather than in the Christian spirit, though he protests against the luxury and damned incest which defiles his royal bed, yet is he nobly pitiful to the wretched woman through whose frailty the transgression arises ; and it is worthy

of remark that after the intercession of the Ghost, Hamlet's manner to his mother entirely changes. In his former reference to the incest he makes her a full partner of the crime. In his subsequent one he represents the King as the tempter, and supposes her future conduct as that of "a queen fair, sober, wise;" and to the end he gives her his affection and confidence.

That the apparition is not an hallucination, as the Queen thought, a bodiless creation caused by the diseased brain, is known to Hamlet and the reader of the play by its previous appearance, and by its reference to the disclosure then made. Its use of speech distinguishes it from the silent ghost of Banquo. It seems an error to put the Ghost on the stage clad in armour on this second occasion.

"My father, in his *habit* as he lived?"

indicates that this time the design of the poet was to represent the dead king in the weeds of peace. The quarto edition, indeed, gives as a stage direction, "Enter the Ghost, in his night-gown." The appearance in this form would be suited to the place, even as the *cap-à-pie* armament to the place of warlike guard. Unlike the appearance on the battery, which is seen by all who were present, on this occasion it is only visible to Hamlet, and invisible to his mother. Ghosts were supposed to have the power to make themselves visible and invisible to whom they chose;

and the dramatic effect of the Queen's surprise at Hamlet's behaviour was well worth the poetic exercise of this privilege. The Queen, indeed, must have been thoroughly convinced of her son's madness, in despite of his own disclaimer, and of the remorseless energy with which he wrings her own remorseful heart. Her exclamation, "Alas, he's mad!" is thoroughly sincere; and though her assurance that she has "no life to breathe" the secret that he is "but mad in craft" seems to imply her assent to the fact, Hamlet's language and demeanour are certainly not such as are calculated to convince her of the truth of this avowal. She is therefore likely to have spoken not falsely, but according to her convictions, when she immediately afterwards says that her son is

"Mad as the sea and wind, when both contend
Which is the mightier."

The Queen in this ghost scene, and Lady Macbeth in the banquet scene, are placed in very similar circumstances. They both refer the appearances, by which the son of the one and the husband of the other are so terribly moved, to a morbid state of the brain; they both, but in very different degrees, are endeavouring to conceal remorse. But the Danish Queen is affrighted at the behaviour of her son; the Scottish Queen, incapable of fear, is mainly anxious about the effect which her husband's conduct will have upon the bystanders. The one gives free expression to her alarm,—she allows amazement to sit visible in her

expression and attitude ; the other, firm and self-possessed, is the ruling spirit of the hour. The one is a middle-aged voluptuary who, incestuously married to a drunkard of degraded appearance, has feelings so little refined that, until her son holds up the mirror to her soul, she is barely sensible of her own shameless position ; the other, a great criminal, is as self-conscious as she is outwardly confident. The one is animated with the spirit of Belial, the other with that of Satan.

Hamlet finds that his assumed madness, which he puts on and off rather capriciously, is likely to become an impediment to a right understanding with his mother. He sees her ready to deny the reality of her own trespass, because it is mirrored to her with the demeanour and, in some sort, with the words of ecstasy. He therefore offers as tests of his sanity, that his pulse is temperate, that his attention is under command, and his memory faithful ; tests which we are bound to pronounce about as fallacious as could well be offered, and which could only apply to febrile delirium and mania. The pulse in mania averages about fifteen beats above that of health ; that of the insane generally, including maniacs, only averages nine beats above the healthy standard : the pulse of melancholia and monomania is not above the average. That a maniac would gambol from reproducing in the same words any statement he had made, is true enough in the acute forms of the disease ; but it is

not so in numberless instances of chronic mania, nor in melancholia or partial insanity. The dramatic representations which are in vogue in some asylums prove the power of attention and memory preserved by many patients; indeed, the possessor of the most brilliant memory we ever met with was a violent and mischievous maniac. He would quote page after page from the Greek, Latin, and French classics. The Iliad, and the best plays of Molière in particular, he seemed to have at his fingers' ends. In raving madness, however, the two symptoms referred to by Hamlet are as a rule present. The pulse is accelerated, and the attention is so distracted by thick-flowing fancies, that an account can scarcely be given of the same matter in the same words. It is, therefore, to this form alone that the test of verbal memory applies.

The death of "the unseen good old man" Polonius, which Hamlet in his "lawless fit" and "brainish apprehension" had effected, adds to the alarm of the King, already excited by the "pranks too broad to bear with" of the play. The courtiers and the Queen do not seem to have inquired how it was that the King was so marvellously distempered with choler, wherefore he became so much offended with the catastrophe of the play. Like good courtiers, they accept his humour unquestioning. Now, however, the King has a good presentable excuse for alarm.

"O heavy deed !
It had been so with us, had we been there :

His liberty is full of threats to all ;
To you yourself, to us, to every one.
Alas, how shall this bloody deed be answer'd ?
It will be laid to us, whose providence
Should have kept short, restrain'd and out of haunt,
This mad young man : but so much was our love,
We would not understand what was most fit ;
But, like the owner of a foul disease,
To keep it from divulging, let it feed
Even on the pith of life."

From which it appears that the all-observing eye of the poet had noted the custom of the world to conceal the occurrence of insanity within the family circle, a custom which still prevails, and from which much evil is wrought. To keep secret the existence of this dreaded malady, the relatives of an insane person oftentimes postpone all effectual treatment until the time of its usefulness is past ; and they forego measures of security until some terrible calamity results. Accepting the ignorant and wicked opinion that disease of the brain is disgraceful, they give grounds to others for holding this opinion, by the sacrifices they are willing to make that the existence of insanity in the family may be concealed. They not only sacrifice to this the safety of the public, but that of the patient himself, with his present comfort and the probable means of restoration. From motives variously compounded of selfishness and ignorance, they ignore the two great principles in the successful treatment of insanity, that it must be early, and that it must be conducted in

scenes remote from those influences in which it has its origin. Under a real or assumed regard for the feelings of the unhappy patients, they retain them at homes which may once have been happy, but which now have become places of moral torture, where every look inflicts a wound, every word probes a sore. When the patient is removed to fresh scenes, and to that skilfully arranged repose of the excited mental functions, which is provided for in a judicious system of treatment, the misery inflicted by the disease abates, even as the anguish of a broken limb is allayed by simple rest and well-arranged position.

In the following scene with Rosencrantz, Guildenstern, and the King, Hamlet is again in his most antic disposition of mind. His sarcastic irony to his two old schoolfellows, whom he now trusts as he would adders fanged, is more directly insulting than before. They are sponges that soak up the King's countenance, the ape's first morsel, first mouthed, last swallowed. Still he throws a thicker cloak of counterfeit unreason over his sarcasm than he has done before. His replies,

“The body is with the king, but the king is not with the body. The king is a thing—”

“— of nothing : bring me to him. Hide fox, and all after ;”

his answers to the King, “Farewell, dear mother,” “My mother : Father and mother is man and wife ; man and wife is one flesh ; and so, my mother”—are

fairly on a par in unreasoning suggestiveness with his reply to Polonius, "For if the sun breed maggots," etc. These mad absurdities are never altogether meaningless, and never altogether foreign to the natural train of his own thoughts. The description of Polonius at supper, "not where he eats, but where he is eaten," is the foreshadowing idea of the serious and earnest meditations on the mutability of matter in which he afterwards indulges over the churchyard skulls. "A man may fish with a worm that hath eat of a king; and eat of the fish that hath fed of that worm." And thus, "A king may go a progress," etc. 'Tis the very same speculation as that so seriously expressed to his friend :

"To what base uses we may return, Horatio ! Why may not imagination trace the noble dust of Alexander, till he find it stopping a bung-hole?"

This is the philosophy he had learnt at Wittenburg, and which he toyed with to the last. He had learned, indeed, its inadequacy to explain all things by immaterial evidence, sights which make

"us fools of nature,
So horribly to shake our disposition
With thoughts beyond the reaches of our souls."

He had been compelled to acknowledge that there "are more things in heaven and earth than are dreamt of" in this philosophy. Still this form of speculation was the habit of the mind, and whether in antic disposition of madness, or in earnest converse with

his friend, it is found his frequent topic. Might not this habit of dwelling upon the material laws to which our flesh is subject, have been resorted to as a kind of antidote to those "thoughts beyond the reaches of the soul" to which his father's apparition had given rise,—his father, whose "bones had burst their cere-ments," whose sepulchre had oped its ponderous jaws to cast him up again. Was not this materialist specula-tion a struggle against these thoughts, and akin to the unconscious protest against the Ghost, that beyond the grave is

•
"The undiscover'd country, from whose bourn
No traveller returns."

Alas for Hamlet! What with his material philosophy and his spiritual experiences, there was contention enough in that region of the intellect which abuts upon veneration, to unhinge the soundest judgment; let alone the grief, and shame, and just anger, of which his uncle's crimes and his mother's frailty were the more than sufficient cause in so sensitive a mind.

In the following scene with the captain of the army of Fortinbras, we have a comment upon the folly of useless war, and an occasion for another fine motive-weighing soliloquy; like the prayer scene, useless indeed to the progress of the piece, but exquisite in itself. Never does Shakespeare seem to have found a character so suited to give noble utterance to his own most profound meditations as in

Hamlet. It is on this account that we unconsciously personify Shakespeare in this character, as we personify Byron in Childe Harold, or Sterne in Yorick, and, may we not add, Goëthe in Faust.

The soliloquy "How all things do inform against me" marks a state of inclination to act, in advance of that manifested in the soliloquy beginning "Oh, what a rogue and peasant slave am I!" but still not screwed up to the point of resolve. The gross example of soldiers, who "for a fantasy and trick of fame" are so lavish of life and limb, places before Hamlet in the strongest light his own craven scruples, and, as he chooses to say, his apprehension of results. But on this point he does not do himself justice. His personal courage is of the most undaunted temper. In his first interview with the Ghost he does not set his "life at a pin's fee"; and the independent evidence of Fortinbras testifies to his high promise as a soldier. It is not the lack of courage, but the inability to carry the excitements of his reason and his blood into an act so repugnant to his nature as the assassination of his uncle, that yet withdraws his hand; and although he concludes,

"O, from this time forth
My thoughts be bloody, or be nothing worth!"

he leaves his purpose unfulfilled, and allows himself to be sent out of the country—a proceeding likely to postpone his revenge indefinitely, or to defeat it altogether; and it is not until he discovers the King's

villainous plot against his own life, that he determines to "quit him with this arm."

The colloquy with the grave-digger and Horatio in the churchyard affords abundant proof that the biting satire and quaintness of thought, which have been accepted as the antic garb of Hamlet's mind, are quite natural to him when he is playing no part. The opening observation on the influence of custom is a favourite theme with him. When he wishes to wring his mother's heart, he is apprehensive whether

"damned custom have not brass'd it so
That it is proof and bulwark against sense."

And when he dissuades her from her incestuous intercourse, he says :

"That monster, custom, who all sense doth eat,
Of habits devil, is angel yet in this,
That to the use of actions fair and good
He likewise gives a frock or livery,
That aptly is put on."

"For use almost can change the stamp of nature,
And either curb the devil, or throw him out
With wondrous potency."

Custom, therefore, brazes the heart in vice ; custom fortifies the body in habits of virtue ; it also blunts the sensibilities of the mind ; so that grave-making becomes "a property of easiness."

"Tis even so : the hand of little employment hath the daintier sense."

This, however, is but half truth. The "hand of little employment" hath not always "the daintier sense" in

use. Does custom blunt the fingers of a watchmaker, the eyes of a printer, or the auditory nerve of a musician? Did the grave-digger do his own sombre work with less skill because he had been accustomed to it for thirty years? Custom blunts our sensations to those impressions which we do not attend to, and sharpens them to those which we do. Custom in Hamlet himself had sharpened the speculative faculties which he exercised, while it had dulled the active powers which depend upon that resolution which he did not practise.

Hamlet's comments upon the skulls,—upon the politicians, who could circumvent God,—on the courtiers, who praised my lord Such-a-one's horse when he meant to beg it,—on the lawyers, whose fine of fines is to have his fine pate full of fine dirt, and whose vouchers vouch him for no more of his purchases than the length and breadth of a pair of indentures,—are the quaint prosaic expression of his melancholy, his gloomy view of the nothingness of life, combined with his peculiar speculations upon death as the mere corruption of the body. He revolts at the idea of this ignoble life, as he thinks it, ending in annihilation, and he equally recoils at the idea that it may end in bad dreams. He thinks that if death is an eternal sleep, such an end of the ills of life is a consummation devoutly to be wished, but the fear that it is an eternal dream is unendurable. His fancy is too active to permit him to rush into an

eternity of unknown consciousness. Like Prince Henry, in the *Spanish Student*, he feels,

“Rest ! rest ! O give me rest and peace !
The thought of life that ne'er shall cease
Has something in it like despair,
A weight I am too weak to bear.”

To return to his mother earth an unconscious clod seems his most earnest hope; yet when the offensive *débris* of mortality meets his eyes, such an ignoble termination of mental activity revolts both his sensibility and his reason. “Here's a fine revolution, if one had the trick to see't” His bones ache to think on't. When he sees the skull of his old friend the jester, from whose companionship he may have derived much of his own skill in word-fence and poignancy of wit, his imagination is absolutely disgusted.

“Alas, poor Yorick ! I knew him, Horatio : a fellow of infinite jest, of most excellent fancy : he hath borne me on his back a thousand times ; and now, how abhorred in my imagination it is ! my gorge rises at it. Here hung those lips that I have kissed I know not how oft. Where be your gibes now ? your gambols ? your songs ? your flashes of merriment, that were wont to set the table on a roar ? Not one now, to mock your own grinning ? quite chap-fallen ? Now get you to my lady's chamber, and tell her, let her paint an inch thick, to this favour she must come ; make her laugh at that.”

The grave-digger's jest that Hamlet's madness will not matter in England, since “'twill not be seen in him : there the men are as mad as he,” is legitimate enough in the mouth of a foreigner, since for ages

have the continentals jested upon the mad English, who hang themselves by scores every day, and who, in November especially, immolate themselves in hecatombs to the dun goddess of spleen. By this time the jest has somewhat lost its point. At least, it may be said that if the English furnish as many madmen as their neighbours, they are somewhat better acquainted with the means of ameliorating their sad condition. Madness, however, and suicide are now known to be as prevalent in the great neighbour nation, whose writers jest upon the universal diffusion of the curse.

All men are mad, writes Boileau, the grand distinction among them being the amount of skill employed in concealing the crack : and if statistics prove anything with regard to suicides, it is that our once volatile neighbours have an unhappy advantage over us in that respect, both in numbers and variety. If it was ever a habit with us, it has now become a fashion with them.

The funeral of Ophelia, and the bravery of her brother's grief, are the occasion of conduct in Hamlet which cannot be considered either that of a reasonable man or of a counterfeit madman. He acknowledges to his friend that he forgot himself, and that he was in a towering passion. The more probable explanation is, that the shock of Ophelia's death, made known to him so suddenly, strangely, and painfully, gave rise to an outburst of passionate excitement referrible to

the latent unsoundness of his mind, and that the Queen's explanation of his conduct is the true one :

“ This is mere madness :
And thus awhile the fit will work on him ;
Anon, as patient as the female dove,
When that her golden couplets are disclosed,
His silence will sit drooping.”

It indeed looks like madness ; for why should a brother's phrase of sorrow over the grave of a sister, however exaggerated its expression, excite a sane lover to such rage,—the rage of passion, not of grief. A sane man would have been struck dumb by overwhelming grief, if he had thus accidentally met at the verge of the tomb the body of a mistress whom he devotedly loved, and whose stinted ritual betokened that with desperate hand she had foredone her own life. In Hamlet's state of mind the occurrence gives birth to rash conduct and vehement passion ; passion, be it remarked, not caused by the struggle in the grave, but by the bravery of the brother's grief.

Although after this scene Hamlet converses with thorough calmness with his self-possessed friend, there are passages which strongly indicate the morbid state of his mind. Speaking of his condition on ship-board, he says :

“ Sir, in my heart there was a kind of fighting,
That would not let me sleep : methought I lay
Worse than the mutines in the bilboes.”

And again, referring to his present feelings, he says : “ Thou wouldst not think how ill all's here about my

heart; but it's no matter." "It is but foolery; but it is such a kind of gain-giving as would, perhaps, trouble a woman."

Above all, if his conduct in the churchyard is not the result of morbidly violent emotion, uncontrolled by reason, what can we say of his own explanation:

"Give me your pardon, sir: I've done you wrong;
But pardon 't, as you are a gentleman.

This presence knows, and you must needs have heard,
How I am punish'd with a sore distraction.

What I have done,

That might your nature, honour and exception
Roughly awake, I here proclaim was madness.

Was't Hamlet wrong'd Laertes? Never Hamlet:
If Hamlet from himself be ta'en away,

And when he's not himself does wrong Laertes,
Then Hamlet does it not, Hamlet denies it.

Who does it, then? His madness: if 't be so,
Hamlet is of the faction that is wrong'd;
His madness is poor Hamlet's enemy.

Sir, in this audience,

Let my disclaiming from a purposed evil
Free me so far in your most generous thoughts,
That I have shot mine arrow o'er the house,
And hurt my brother."

Except the above brief reference to the inner wretchedness, which Horatio takes for an evil augury, Hamlet shews no disposition to melancholy after the rough incidents of his sea voyage. The practice of the King upon his life appears to have fixed his resolve: He'll wait till no further evil is hatched. He that hath

"Thrown out his angle for my proper life,
And with such cozenage; is't not perfect conscience

To quit him with this arm? and is't not to be damn'd
To let this canker of our nature come
In further evil?"

Moreover, what there is to do he'll do quickly. The issue of the business in England, with Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, will quickly be known, but

"the interim is mine;
And a man's life's no more than to say, one."

In this temper it would have been frivolous in him to have accepted the challenge of Laertes, were it not that he saw in it an opportunity to right himself with his old friend, by the image of whose cause he read the portraiture of his own. It is after a seeming reconciliation thus obtained, that he determines to accept "this brother's wager." Might not also the challenge be accepted as likely to offer a good opportunity to meet the King, and "quit him with this arm," an opportunity which he now resolves to seize whenever it offers? The sentiment of coming evil lends probability to the thought.

"Not a whit, we defy augury: there's a special providence in the fall of a sparrow. If it be now, 'tis not to come; if it be not to come, it will be now: if it be not now, yet it will come: the readiness is all: since no man has aught of what he leaves, what is't to leave betimes?"

The final scene of indiscriminate slaughter, which, as Fortinbras says, would more become a battle-field than a palace, points the moral so obvious throughout the piece, that the end of action is not within the hands of the human agents. The blow which finally

quits the King was fully deserved for his last act. His end has an accidental suddenness about it, which disappoints the expectation of judicial revenge. Like Laertes, he is a woodcock caught in his own springe. Retribution is left to the terrible future, whose mysteries have been partially unveiled ; and the mind, prepared by the revelations of the Ghost, accepts the death of the King but as the beginning of his quittance.

The death of Hamlet has been objected to as cruel and needless ; but would it not rather have been cruel to have left him alive in this harsh world, drawing his breath in pain ? Heart-broken, and in that half-mad state which is vastly more painful than developed insanity, what could he do here, after the one act for which he was bound to live had been accomplished. Had he survived he must have sank into inert motiveless melancholy, or have struggled on in the still more painful state of contention between conscience and suicidal desire. To prevent a wounded name being left behind him, he can command his friend to "absent him from felicity awhile"; but for himself the best is the dark mantle of oblivion, the rest with hope which his friend so gracefully expresses :

"Now cracks a noble heart. Good night, sweet prince ;
And flights of angels sing thee to thy rest !"

There is no attempted poetical justice in this bloody finale to the drama. The way of the world rather is followed in the indiscriminate mischief. Sweet Ophelia and noble Hamlet meet the same fate which

attends the incestuous Queen, the villainous King, the passionate Laertes, and the well-meaning Polonius. The vortex of crime draws down the innocent and the guilty, the balance of desert being left for adjustment in the dark future. The intricacy of the action and the unexpected nature of the events are copied from life as closely as that marvellous delineation of motive and feeling which brings Hamlet so intimately home to the consciousness of reflective men. Those dramas in which we accurately foresee the event in the first act are as little like the reality of human life as a geometric problem is like a landscape. Granted that there is nothing like accident in human affairs, that if a special providence in the fall of a sparrow may be doubted, the subjection of the most trivial circumstances to general laws is beyond question; still, in human affairs the multiplicity and mutual interference of these laws are such, that it is utterly beyond human foresight to trace forward the thread of events with any certainty. In Hamlet this uncertainty is peculiarly manifested. Everything is traceable to causes, which operate, however, in a manner which the most astute forecaster of events could never have anticipated; though, after their occurrence, it is easy enough to trace and name them, as Horatio promised to do.

“So shall you hear
Of carnal, bloody, and unnatural acts,
Of accidental judgments, casual slaughters,
Of deaths put on by cunning and forced cause,

And, in this upshot, purposes mistook
Fall'n on the inventors' heads : all this can I
Truly deliver."

Although we arrive at the conviction that Hamlet is morbidly melancholic, and that the degree to which he puts on a part is not very great; that, by eliminating a few hurling words, and the description which Ophelia gives of the state of his stockings, there is little either in his speech or conduct which is truly feigned; let us guard ourselves from conveying the erroneous impression that he is a veritable lunatic. He is a reasoning melancholiac, morbidly changed from his former state of thought, feeling, and conduct. He has "foregone all custom of exercise," and longs to commit suicide, but dares not. Yet, like the melancholiacs described by Burton, he is "of profound judgment in some things, excellent apprehensions, judicious, wise, and witty; for melancholy advanceth men's conceits more than any humour whatever." He is in a state which thousands pass through without becoming truly insane, but which in hundreds does pass into actual madness. It is the state of incubation of disease, "in which his melancholy sits on brood," and which, according to the turn of events or the constitution of the brain, may hatch insanity, or terminate in restored health.

There is an apparent inconsistency between the sombre melancholy of Hamlet's solitary thoughts and the jesting levity of his conversation, even when he

seeks least to put on the guise of antic behaviour; an inconsistency apparent only, for in truth this gloomy reverie, which in solitude "runs darkling down the stream of fate," is thoroughly coherent in nature with the careless mocking spirit playing in derisive contempt with the foibles of others. The weeping and the mocking philosopher are not usually divided as of old, but are united in one, whose laugh is bestowed on the vanity of human wishes as observed in the world around, while the earnest tear is reserved for the more deeply felt miseries of his own destiny. The historian of melancholy himself was a philosopher of this complexion. Deeply imbued with melancholy when his mental gaze was introverted, when employed upon others it was more mocking than serious, more minute than profound. Thence came the charming and learned gossip of the *Anatomy*; thence also the curious habit recorded of him, that for days together he would sit on a post by the river-side, listening and laughing at the oaths and jeers of the boatmen, and thus finding a strange solace for his own profound melancholy. Here is his own evidence :

"Humorous they (melancholiacs) are beyond measure; sometimes profusely laughing, extraordinary merry, and then again weeping without a cause; groaning, sighing, pensive, sad, almost distracted, restless in their thoughts and actions, continually meditating.

Velut ægri somnia, vanæ
Finguntur species;
more like dreamers than men awake, they feign a company
of antick fantastical conceits."

There is an intimate relationship between melancholy and humour. The fact is finely touched in the Yorick of Lawrence Sterne, and, what is more to the purpose, in the real history of many of the most celebrated humourists; and the truth even descends to those humourists of action, theatrical clowns. Who has not heard the story of one of the most celebrated of these applying incognito to a physician for the relief of melancholy, and being referred for a remedy to his own laughter-moving antics? Not that humour is always attended by any tinge or tendency to melancholy, as the plenitude of this faculty exhibited by jolly Sir John fully proves. Still there is this in common to the roystering humour of Falstaff, the melancholy humour of Jacques, and the sarcastic humour of Hamlet, that they have each a perverse ingenuity in contemplating the weakness and selfishness of human motive. Wit deals with ideas and their verbal representations; humour with motives and emotions; and that melancholy cast of thought, which tends to exhibit our own motives in an unfavourable light, is apt to probe the motives of others with searching insight, and to represent them in those unexpected contrasts and those true but unusual colours which tickle the intelligence with their novelty and strangeness.

The character of Hamlet presents another contrast, which, if not more obvious than the above, has at least attracted more attention, perhaps because he himself

comments upon it, and because it is a main point upon which the drama turns. It is the contrast between his vivid intellectual activity, and the inertness of his conduct. To say that this depends upon a want of the power of will to transmute thought into action, is to do no more than to change one formula of words into another. There must be some better explanation for the unquestionable fact that one man of great intellectual vigour becomes a thinker only, and another a man of vehement action. That activity of intellect is in itself adverse to decisiveness of conduct, is abundantly contradicted by biography. That activity of intellect may exist with the utmost powerlessness, or even perversity of conduct, is equally proved by the well-known biographies of many men, "who never said a foolish thing, and never did a wise one." The essential difference of men who are content to rest in thought, and those who transmute it into action, appears not to consist in the presence or absence of that incomprehensible function, that unknown quantity of the mind, the *will*; but in the presence or absence of clearly-defined and strongly-felt *desire*, and in that power of movement which can only be derived from the exercise of power, that is, from the habit of action. It is conceivable, as Sir James Mackintosh has well pointed out, that an intellectual being might exist examining all things, comparing all things, knowing all things, but desiring and doing nothing. It is equally conceivable that

a being might exist with two strong desires, so equally poised that the result should be complete neutralization of each other, and a state of inaction as if no emotional spring to conduct whatever existed. Hence, inaction may arise from want of desire, or from equipoise of desire.

It is, moreover, conceivable that an intellectual being might exist, in whom desires were neither absent nor equipoised, but in whom the habit of putting desires into action had never been formed. We are indeed so constituted, that clearly-formed desires tend naturally to transmute themselves into action, and the idea of a being at once intellectual and emotional, in whom circumstances have entirely prevented the development of the habit of action, has more the character of a metaphysical speculation than of a possible reality. Still the immense influence of habit upon the power of action is unquestionable, and the want of this habit appears to have been one chief cause of Hamlet's inert and dilatory conduct, and of the contention between that meditative cast of thought which he in vain strove to screw up to the point of action, and the desire to discharge that repulsive duty which his uncle's villanies had laid upon him. That the time was out of joint would have been for him a subject of painful reflection only, but for the accursed spite which had laid it upon him to set it right, and which was the cause of that fierce moral strife between duty and disposition which forms

the innermost web of the piece. The rash execution of an unpremeditated action is entirely consistent with this sensitive motive-weighing inability to act upon mature resolve. The least resolute men are often the most rash ; as quick spasm in feeble muscles is substituted for healthy, regular, and prolonged exertion. Hamlet praises rashness in the instance in which it served him, but he would scarcely have been able to have done so when it led him to slay Polonius in mistake for the King ; and the incidents of the drama, no more than the incidents of real life, justify us in rough-hewing our purposes with rashness, though the Divinity may shape the ends even of our most politic arrangements.

This reasoning melancholiac, disgusted with the world, and especially disgusted with the repulsive duty which a hard fate has laid upon him, is not less different to the Hamlet of the past, to him who had been

“The expectancy and rose of the fair state,”
to him who, as a soldier,

“was likely, had he been put on,
To have proved most royally,”

than he is the good feeble young gentleman whom Goëthe describes, and whose “mind is too feeble for the accomplishment” of “the great action imposed as a duty.” “Here is an oak planted in a vase; proper only to receive the most delicate flowers.

The roots strike out, the vessel flies to pieces. A pure, noble, highly moral disposition, but without that energy of soul which constitutes a hero, sinks under a load which it can neither support nor abandon altogether." "Observe how he shifts, hesitates, advances, and recedes!" Goëthe's simile however, beautiful though it be, appears to halt on both feet, for the great action, which is the oak, does not strike out its roots, does not increase in magnitude or responsibility; nor does the Prince deserve to be compared to a vase, senseless and inert, which cannot expand or "shift"; and, moreover, it is not the greatness of the action which is above the energy of his soul, but the nature of it which is repulsive to its nobility. If Hamlet must be compared to a vase, let it not be to a flower-pot, but to that kingly drinking-cup, whose property it was to fly to pieces when poison was poured into it.

In addition to the above, there are other causes of turmoil in Hamlet's mind less plainly stated, but traceable enough throughout the piece. One of these is the contention between his religious sentiments and his sceptical philosophy. His mind constantly wavers between belief and unbelief; between confidence in an overruling Providence, who shapes all our ends to wise purposes, and even permits its angels and ministers of grace to attend unseen on our hours of trial; between this reverential faith and that scepticism which sees in man but so much animated dust, and looks upon death as annihilation. The pain of

this same doubt has been finely expressed by him, whom future centuries will regard as the great lyric of the nation, even as Shakespeare is for aye its great dramatist :

“ I trust I have not wasted breath :
I think we are not wholly brain,
Magnetic mockeries ; not in vain,
Like Paul with beasts, I fought with Death :
Not only cunning casts in clay :
Let Science prove we are, and then
What matters Science unto men—
At least, to me ? I would not stay.”

“ And he, shall he
Who loved, who suffered countless ills,
Who battled for the true and just,
Be blown about the desert dust,
Or sealed within the iron hills ?”

Indeed, the manifold points of resemblance between Hamlet and *In Memoriam* are remarkable. In each the great questions of eternal interest are debated by a mind to whom profound grief makes this world a sterile promontory. The unknowable future absorbs all interest. The lyric bard, however, fights his way to more light than the dramatist attains. The fear of annihilation oppresses, but does not conquer him. He rebukes Lazarus for holding his peace on that which afflicts the doubting soul, but for himself he **fights** his way to faith.

“ He fought his doubts, and gathered strength ;
He would not make his judgment blind ;
He faced the spectres of the mind,
And laid them.”

It is not easy to estimate the amount of emotional disturbance for which Love is answerable in Hamlet's mind. Probably, if other matters had gone well with him, Ophelia's forced unkindness would easily have been seen through and overcome ; but, with a mind pre-occupied with the dread mission of his father's revenge, it is likely that he would not question the earnestness of Ophelia's rejection, and that "to the pangs of despised love" he might well attribute one of the most poignant ills that flesh is heir to. His demeanour to Ophelia, when he first puts on his antic disposition, and which she so graphically describes, not less than his own avowal at her grave, that "twenty thousand brothers could not make up his sum of love," point to the existence, not of "trivial fond records," but of a passion for her both deep and constant ; a passion thrust rudely into the background indeed, but not extinguished or even weakened, by the more urgent emotions of revenge for his father, of shame for his mother, of scorn and hatred for his uncle. ✓ The character of Hamlet would have been incomplete if the element of love had been forgotten in its composition. Harshly as he may seem to treat his mistress, this element adds a warm sienna tint to the portraiture, without which it would have been not only cold and hard, but less true* to the nature of the melancholy sensitive being delineated. ✓ There is little trace of ambition in his character ; for, although he makes the King's having stepped

between the election and his hopes one in the list of his injuries, his comments upon the manner in which this was done savour of contempt for his uncle's ignoble means of success, for the manner in which he filched the crown, and was "a cutpurse of the empire and the rule," rather than of any profound disappointment that the election had not fallen upon himself. Indeed, this character has been painted in dimensions far exceeding those of the sceptred rulers of the earth. Ambition would have dwarfed him to the type of a class; he stands forth the mighty poetical type of the race.

✓ It is this universal humanity of the character which lies at the root of its wonderful reality and familiarity. Hamlet seems known to us like an old friend. "This is that Hamlet the Dane," says Hazlitt, "whom we read of in our youth, and whom we seem almost to remember in our after years." "Hamlet is a name: his speeches and sayings but the idle coinage of the poet's brain. What, then, are they not real? They are as real as our own thoughts. Their reality is in the reader's mind. It is *we* who are Hamlet. This play has a prophetic truth which is above that of history."] Are we then wrong in treating Hamlet as a reality, and in debating the state of his mind with more care than we would choose to bestow upon the insane vagaries of an Emperor Paul or a Frederick Wilhelm? Have we not more sure data upon which to exercise judgment than upon the uncertain truth

of history? Buckle, in his *History of Civilization*, has elaborately argued the madness of Burke; a domestic grief, a change of temper, and above all, a change of political opinions from those which the historian thinks true to those which he thinks false, being held sufficient to establish the confirmed insanity of the great statesman. Those who read the ingenious argument will feel convinced at least of this, that history rarely or never leaves grounds relative enough to solve such a question. Nay, when we are close upon the footsteps of a man's life, when the question is not one of learned trifling, like that of the insanity of Socrates, but the practical one of whether a man just dead was competent to devise his property, when his papers and letters are ransacked, his daily life minutely examined, when scores of men who knew him intimately bear testimony to their knowledge, we often find the balance of probability so even, that it is impossible to say to which side it inclines, and the feelings of the jury as often as not fabricate the will. But when the great mind of mind speaks out as in Hamlet, it is not so. Then it is as in the justice of Heaven, then the "action lies in its true nature," which neither ignorance can obscure nor sophistry pervert.

It is by this great faculty that Shakespeare unfolds to our view the book of the mind, and shews alike its fairest and most blotted pages, and leaves in us a thirst not for more light, but for more power to read.

of Shakespeare's individuality in any of these characters, except in Hamlet and in Jacques. Doubtless there was melancholy and cynicism enough in the great bard, but there could have been no real misanthropy, no mad fury, no stern congelation of feeling, as in Timon, Lear, and the Duke ; nor is there any of these in Hamlet or Jacques, or in the real heart history as it is written in the Sonnets.

Misanthropy and cynicism appear to have been very generally confounded. Doubtless they are often found together ; yet is there a wide difference between the two in their real nature. The cynic may even carp and sneer at the faults of his brother men from the depth of his human love, and thus be at quite the opposite pole of feeling to him who avows "I am misanthropos, and hate mankind." The author of *Rasselas*, that prosaic reflection of Hamlet, was eminently a cynic ; yet a more tender and pitiful soul never animated human clay, than that which dwelt in the burly Diogenes of Fleet Street. He of Sinope so zealously inculcated virtue as to derive from Plato the nickname of the mad Socrates. Though he lived in a tub he loved mankind, and rudely taught them at how cheap a rate they might obtain happiness. But misanthropy is quite a different thing, either from melancholic dissatisfaction or cynical content. It is a perversion of all human sympathy, incompatible with all nobility of soul, and, most of all, with that sympathetic touchstone of

human emotions, the soul of the true poet. We recognise this in Swift, who was a misanthropist *pur sang*, and whose vast intellectual powers might have placed him among the first of his country's poets, had not his sympathies been utterly out of unison with those of his kind. The true expression of universal hatred is not that of exalted passion, but that of the heartless sneer which is utterly anti-pathetic. Goëthe touches the point when he makes the man-hating demon excuse himself in the heavenly court from the use of pathetic speech.

“Verzeih, ich kann nicht hohe Worte machen,
Mein Pathos brachte dich gewiss zum Lachen.”

The poetic soul of Faust, on the contrary, swells with wide and warm human sympathy; although in despairing rage he curses all human desires, all hope, all faith, and, above all, all patience. In one of these characters we have true misanthropy serving as a foil to the other, to whom, as in Hamlet, not man but man's position is hateful, and whose human sympathies are passionate, even in the despair which cries out in the life-weary agony, and almost in the words of Hamlet:

“Und so ist mir das Daseyn eine Last
Der Tod erwünscht, das Leben mir verhasst.”

An enquiry into the mental pathology of this character may aptly conclude with a quotation from the writings of a kindred and cotemporary mind to that of the great dramatist, namely, those of Michael

de Montaigne. Coleridge, in his truly beautiful lectures, which have been so happily preserved by the notes of Mr. Payne Collier, admits that “such a mind as Hamlet’s is near akin to madness” from its “greatness of genius,” which is the sense in which Dryden used the word “wit” in the line—

“Great wit to madness nearly is allied.”

Montaigne actually saw the saddest exemplification of this truth in one of the greatest “wits” of the age—the immortal Tasso. His comments on the sad spectacle are less harsh than they seem; for although very far from being deficient in human sympathy and pity, he also had a strong dash of the cynic in him, cynicism without misanthropy.

“What puts the soul beside itself, and more usually throws it into madness, but her own promptness, vigour, and agility, and finally her own proper force? Of what is the most subtle folly made, but of the most subtle wisdom? As great friendships spring from great enmities, and vigorous health from mortal diseases, so from the rare and vivid agitations of our souls proceed the most wonderful and most distracted frenzies; ’tis but half a turn of the toe from the one to the other. In the actions of madmen we see how infinitely madness resembles the most vigorous operations of the soul. Who does not know how indescribable the difference is betwixt folly and the sprightly aspirations of a free soul, and the effects of a supreme and extraordinary virtue? Plato says that melancholy persons are the most capable of discipline, and the most excellent; and accordingly in none is there so great a propensity to madness. Great wits are ruined by their own proper force and pliability: into what a condition, through his own agitation and promptness of fancy, is one of the most judicious, ingenious,

its parts, and the prominent figures entirely remodeled by the hand of the great master, but designed and originally completed by a stranger.

Of the type of Timon's character there can be no doubt. He is unmistakeably of the family of Hamlet and Lear. The resemblance to Lear especially is close; like him at first, full of unreasoning confidence; like him at last, full of unreasoning hate. In Lear's circumstances, Timon might have followed closely in his steps. The conditions of rank and age and nation do indeed direct the course of the two in paths wide apart, but in actual development of character they are to some extent parallel.

Timon is very far from being a copy from Plutarch's sketch, "a viper, and malicious man unto mankind." He is essentially high-minded and unselfish. His prodigality is unsmeared with profligacy; indeed, it takes to a great degree the form of humane and virtuous generosity, satisfied with the pleasure of doing good, the luxury of giving, without view of recompense. Even his profuse feasting is represented as noble and dignified hospitality, alloyed by no grossness. His temper is sweet and serene; even Apemantus cannot ruffle it.

With all this goodness of heart he is no fool; his remarks on all occasions shew refined and educated intellect. He has sense on all points except two, namely, in the ability to appreciate character, and the knowledge of the relation of things, as represented

by the counters which transfer them. He has all kind of sense except that which is current—common sense. How such a character could be produced in the out-of-door life of Athens, where every citizen had his wits sharpened by contact with those of his neighbours, it would be difficult indeed to conjecture; but the character of Lord Timon in his prosperity is one which may any day be found in the ranks of the English aristocracy. A young man is born to a great name and estate, he inherits a generous disposition and an ardent temper; he is brought up as a little prince, and is never allowed to feel the wholesome pain of an ungratified wish. Can it be matter of wonder that in such a hotbed the growth of mind should be luxuriant and weak. Fortunately for our golden youth they generally undergo the rough discipline of public school and college; their sensibilities are indurated, and their wits sharpened, in societies where, if they find sycophant spirits, they also find independent and even tyrannical ones. But young Crœsus, brought up at home, what must be his destiny in these latter days? When the twenty-first birthday emancipates him from mamma and the mild tutor, well for him if reckless hospitality be his worst offence against prudence; well for him if that old man of the woods, the land steward, does not suffocate him in his tenacious embrace; well for him if the turf and the card-table do not attract his green state of social initiation, devour wealth and destroy

morality. Men who most need knowledge of the selfishness of their fellow men have too often the least of it. Bred up on the sunny parterres of life, they have no experience of the difficulties and dangers of the rough thicket. The human pigeon has not even the resource of fear and swift flight to save him from the accipitres of his race. The fascination of false confidence lends him a willing victim to their talons, and under the chloroform of self-esteem he does not even feel being rent and devoured. So it is with Timon: with intelligence quick enough on all other matters, he is utterly incapable of seeing his relation to men and theirs to him, of appreciating the real value of deed and motive. The kind of knowledge most imperatively needed to guide our conduct is that of relation. It is the first to which the mind opens. The child under ever recurring penalties is compelled to acquaint himself with the relation existing between his person and the physical world; he burns himself, and thereafter dreads the fire. The man under penalties more sharp and lasting must discover his moral relations in this world, must learn to estimate himself and those around him according to the actualities of motive. As the child ascertains that fire and blows cause pain, so the man must learn that flattery is not friendship, that imprudence exacts regret, that the prevalent philosophy of this selfish world is that taught by Lear's unselfish fool, "Let go thy hold when a great wheel runs down a hill, lest

it break thy neck with following ; but the great one that goes upward, let him draw thee after ;” or by Timon’s poet, who laboriously conveys the same idea that flashes from the fool :

“When Fortune in her shift and change of mood
Spurns down her late beloved, all his dependents
Which labour’d after him to the mountain’s top
Even on their hands and knees, let him slip down,
Not one accompanying his declining foot.”

Timon, however, takes a widely different view of life. To him society is a disinterested brotherhood in which to possess largely is but to have the greater scope for the luxury of giving, and in which want itself may be but a means to try one’s friends and to learn their sterling value. His first act of bounty, not less noble than reasonable, is to pay the debt on which his friend Ventidius is imprisoned. It is done with graceful freedom, and his liberated friend is invited to him for further help in the fine sentiment, that

“’Tis not enough to help the feeble up,
But to support him after.”

The dowry of the servant Lucilius, to satisfy the greed of the old miser whose daughter he courts, is more lavish and less reasonable. Timon will counterpoise with his fortune what the old man will give with his daughter, though he feels the burden of the task.

“To build his fortune I would strain a little,
For ’tis a bond of men.”

His inquiries are of the shortest. He has no hesitation, no suspicion, but gives away fortunes as if his means were exhaustless, and his discrimination infallible. He acts in fervent disbelief of his opinion immediately afterwards expressed, that since

“ Dishonour traffics with man’s nature,
He is but outside.”

Timon conducts himself as if all men on the contrary were true to the core like himself, deriving enjoyment from the happiness of others. Life to him is a poet’s dream of goodness and beauty. All men are deserving of his bounty, even as he is deserving of the love and gratitude of all.

But there is more than this reasoning bounty acting upon a false estimate of man’s goodness. Timon gives for the very love of giving; he scatters without motive, further than the pleasure of doing so affords.

“ He outgoes the very heart of kindness.
He pours it out; Plutus, the god of gold,
Is but his steward; no meed, but he repays
Sevenfold above itself.

He scatters jewels, and horses, and costly gifts among the rich, even as he distributes fortunes among the needy. He will have nothing back. Ventidius succeeds to the wealth of his father, and seeks to return the talents which freed him from prison, but Timon will have none of the gold.

“ I gave it freely ever; and there’s none
Can truly say he gives, if he receives.”

This squandering disposition would appear to be the converse of what phrenologists denote acquisitiveness. To coin a word, it is *disquisitiveness*, and in some men would seem to be an innate bias of the disposition. It is to give, for the pleasure of giving ; to spend, for the pleasure of spending, without esteem for the things procured in return. Probably, like the opposite desire of accumulating, it is a secondary mental growth. The love of gold in itself would be as absurd as the love of iron ; but after having been first esteemed for its attributes, its ability to confer pleasure and power, it becomes valued for itself, and the mere love of hoarding, without the slightest reference to the employment of the hoard, takes possession of the mind. So in the opposite mental state, the first pleasures of distributing wealth are, no doubt, derived from the gratification it affords in various ways ; in contributing to the happiness of others ; in purchasing esteem or the semblance of it for one's self ; in apparently raising one's self above the level of those on whom the benefits are conferred, and thus gratifying vanity ; or in the more direct gratification of the senses. The pleasure of enjoyment from these sources is at length unconsciously transferred to the mere act of distribution. To give and to spend for the mere pleasure of doing so, combined with the love of change, are the attributes of many a prodigal who is no profligate, of many a man who, in a stricter sense than that usually applied to the saying, is no one's enemy but his own

—very strictly this can never be said, for in civilized society no man can be his own enemy without injuring others.

Such a man is Timon represented. He appears to have had no strong attachment either to men or things. The jewel recklessly purchased is lavishly thrown to the first friend he meets. His fortune is at every one's command, not only of the old friend in prison, and of the old servant aspiring to fortune, but at that of the flatterers of his own rank, empty in head and heart, who have no real wants or claims.

Timon has indeed a noble theory of friendship, but there wants in it all those heartlights which prove the reality of the thing, as it existed between Hamlet and Horatio, or Celia and Rosalind in the other sex. There is, however, a noble freedom of welcome in his introduction to his first feast:—

“*Timon.* Nay, my lords, ceremony was but devised at first
To set a gloss on faint deeds, hollow welcomes,
Recanting goodness, sorry ere 'tis shown ;
But where there is true friendship, there needs none.
Pray, sit ; more welcome are ye to my fortunes
Than my fortunes to me.”

In his table speech, his explanation of his own profuseness, and his reliance upon a return in kind from his friends, is almost communist in the expression of the idea, that the fortunes of all should be at the service of each:—

“Why, I have often wished myself poorer, that I might come nearer to you. We are born to do benefits : and what

better or properer can we call our own than the riches of our friends? O, what a precious comfort 'tis, to have so many, like brothers, commanding one another's fortunes! O joy, e'en made away ere 't can be born! Mine eyes cannot hold out water, methinks: to forget their faults, I drink to you."

He gives more entertainment, distributes more jewels, showers presents on those who bring them and on those who do not, and, without knowing it, all "out of an empty coffer." What he bespeaks is all in debt, he owes for every word. Honest Flavius seeks to apprise him, but since "it's a word which concerns him near," he will not listen. Even Apemantus, who seems to entertain a surly liking for him, and who seeks to inspire in him some suspicion that friendship has its dregs, tenders advice which this time is not quite railing. He admits him to be honest though a fool.

"Thus honest fools lay out their wealth on court'sies."

He'll not be bribed lest that should shut his mouth, and Timon would then sin the faster; Timon will give so long that soon he will give himself away in paper; but Timon will have none of his warning, it is railing on society; and Apemantus rebuffed at the only moment when he is tolerable, turns on his heel with his rejected advice:

"O, that men's ears should be
To counsel deaf, but not to flattery!"

Timon's profuseness is pourtrayed in the steward's terse account of his debts, and the ever motion of

his raging waste ; but the desire which prompts it is best given in his own words of farewell to his guests :

“ I take all and your several visitations
So kind to heart, 'tis not enough to give ;
Methinks I could deal kingdoms to my friends,
And ne'er be weary.”

But now the time of reckoning approaches, in which it is prophesied that

“ When every feather sticks in his own wing,
Lord Timon will be left a naked gull,
Which flashes now a phoenix.”

He is beset with the clamorous demands of creditors, and turns with reproachful enquiry to the one honest man who has been seeking so long to check the ebb of his estate and this great flow of debts ; and when he at length gives ear to the importunity that can no longer be avoided, his debts double his means, and all his vast lands are engaged or forfeited. No estate could support his senseless prodigality,

“ The world is but a word :
Were it all yours to give it in a breath,
How quickly were it gone !”

Flavius, like Apemantus, refers the motive of Timon's profusion to vanity and the love of compliment :

“ Who is not Timon's ?
What heart, head, sword, force, means, but is lord Timon's ?
Great Timon, noble, worthy, royal Timon !
Ah, when the means are gone that buy this praise,

The breath is gone whereof this praise is made :
Feast-won, fast-lost ; one cloud of winter showers,
These flies are couch'd."

This however is not quite the whole truth. There is doubtless much vanity in Timon's ostentation, but there is also a magnanimous disregard of self, and a false judgment of others founded upon it. His bounty,

"Being free itself, it thinks all other so."

Now comes the real trial, the test of man's value. Riches are gone, but the noble heart is "wealthy in his friends"; it were lack of conscience to think otherwise.

"Timon. Come, sermon me no further :
No villainous bounty yet hath pass'd my heart ;
Unwisely, not ignobly, have I given.
Why dost thou weep ? Canst thou the conscience lack
To think I shall lack friends ? Secure thy heart ;
If I would broach the vessels of my love,
And try the argument of hearts by borrowing,
Men and men's fortunes could I frankly use
As I can bid thee speak."

The trial is made, the bubble bursts ; one after another the friends find characteristic and ingenious excuses. To one, bare friendship without security is nothing ; another is in despair that he hath not furnished himself against so good a time ; another puts on the semblance of anger that he was not sent to first, and pretending that his honour hath thus been abated, he refuses his coin.

The world turns dark with Timon, he is struck down by his friends' desertion.

"Thy lord leans wondrously to discontent, his comfortable temper has forsook him; he is much out of health and keeps his chamber."

The period of depression which would naturally intervene between that of confidence and enraged defiance is concealed from view, and only alluded to in the above sentence. Here, as in Lear and Constance, the poet takes care to mark the concurrence of physical with moral causes of insanity. Mere bodily disease is no subject for dramatic representation; and the fact of its existence is lightly enough indicated, but it is indicated, and that is sufficient to preserve the exact natural verisimilitude of the diseased mind's history. When Timon re-appears, the re-action of furious indignation possesses him. He rushes wildly forth from the house in which his loving servants have sought to retain him. Must his very house also be his enemy, his gaol?

"The place where I have feasted, does it now,
Like all mankind, shew me an iron heart?"

At the door he is beset with a crowd of dunning creditors, adding fuel to the flame of his rage.

"*Philotus.* All our bills.

Timon. Knock me down with 'em: cleave me to the girdle.

Luc. Serv. Alas, my lord,—

Tim. Cut my heart in sums.

Titus. Mine, fifty talents.

Tim. Tell out my blood.

Luc. Serv. Five thousand crowns, my lord.

Tim. Five thousand drops pays that.

What yours?—and yours?

Tim. Tear me, take me, and the gods fall upon you!

Hortensius. 'Faith, I perceive our masters may throw their caps at their money: these debts may well be called desperate ones, for a madman owes 'em:

[*Timon drives them out and re-enters.*

Tim. They have e'en put my breath from me, the slaves. Creditors?—devils."

He gives orders for his farewell feast, although Flavius reminds him of his absolute want of means, and says that in doing so

"You only speak from your distracted soul."

However, Timon and the cook will provide. The feast is toward. The expression of rage is controlled, and the infinite sarcasm of the inverted benediction is pronounced before the guests know what it means. The ambiguity of the language is of course intended to conceal for a moment its true meaning—that men are all villains and women no better; that even their piety is selfishness, so that if the Gods gave all, even they would be despised like Timon; but all being amiss, let all be suitable for destruction.

The dishes uncovered are full of warm water, which Timon throws into the faces of his mock friends, whose perfect nature "is but smoke and lukewarm water." He overwhelms them with a torrent of curses by no means lukewarm, throws the dishes at them, and driving them from the hall, takes his own fare-

well of house and home, bursting with rage and general hate.

“Burn, house ! sink, Athens ! henceforth hated be,
Of Timon man and all humanity !”

The conclusion of the “smiling, smooth, detested parasites” is the same as that already arrived at by the servants, namely

“Lord Timon’s mad.”

Nothing, indeed, is less safe than to adopt the opinion of some of Shakespeare’s characters upon others. He makes them speak of each other according to their own light, which is often partial and perverted, obscured by ignorance, or blinded by prejudice. The spectator sees the whole field, and experiences difficulty of judgment, not from narrowness of vision, but from its extent. In Timon, as in the early parts of Lear, the psychological opinion is embarrassed by the very circumstance which constitutes the difficulty in many cases of dubious insanity, namely, that the operations of diseased mind are not retrograde to those of normal function, but merely divergent from them, in the same general direction.

Timon’s eloquent declamations against his kind are identical in spirit with those of ‘Lear.’ They are, indeed, interrupted by no vagrancy of thought, but are always true to the passion which now absorbs him, namely, intense hatred of the human race, in whom he believes baseness and wickedness inherent.

Here lies his great intellectual error which may indeed be called delusion ; that, because some few men have been base and thankless parasites, the whole race is steeped in infamy. His emotional being is absorbed by indignation, and this, re-acting on the intellect, represents human nature in the darkest colours of treachery and villainy. It is not clearly made out to what degree Timon is influenced by spite. In the imprecation upon Athens, “Let me look back upon thee” etc., he invokes social disorder of every kind as the punishment for his own treatment, and does not represent it as actually existing, and as the cause of his fierce anger. There is some uncertainty in this passage, some confusion of thought between the depraved state of Athens which merits dire punishment, and the social disorders which in themselves constitute such punishment. The wall of Athens is thought to girdle in a mere troop of human wolves. To avenge his own injuries, he prays that the matrons may turn incontinent, that obedience may fail in children, and so forth, recognizing that the contrary has existed, and that social disorder is invoked as the punishment of demerit towards himself. He acknowledges that “degrees, observances, customs, and laws” have held their place, and that their “confounding contraries” would be a new state of things due to that human baseness which is now obvious to his distempered vision through the medium of his own wrongs. In the following scene, where he apos-

trophises “the blessed breeding sun” in vehement declamation, he does not so much invoke curses upon man, as describe man’s actual state as in itself a curse; since he depicts moral depravity in its existing colors.

“*Timon*. O blessed breeding sun, draw from the earth
Rotten humidity; below thy sister’s orb
Infect the air! Twinn’d brothers of one womb,
Whose procreation, residence, and birth,
Scarce is dividant, touch them with several fortunes;
The greater scorns the lesser: not nature,
To whom all sores lay siege, can bear great fortune,
But by contempt of nature.
Raise me this beggar, and deny ’t that lord;
The senator shall bear contempt hereditary,
The beggar native honour.
It is the pasture lards the rother’s sides,
The want that makes him lean. Who dares, who dares,
In purity of manhood stand upright,
And say ‘This man’s a flatterer?’ if one be,
So are they all; for every grise of fortune
Is smooth’d by that below: the learned pate
Ducks to the golden fool: all is oblique;
There’s nothing level in our cursed natures,
But direct villany. Therefore, be abhorr’d
All feasts, societies, and throngs of men!
His semblable, yea, himself, Timon despains:
Destruction fang mankind! Earth, yield me roots!”

Instead of roots he finds gold, yellow, glittering, precious gold, and he comments upon it in terms which still further prove that the social curses he invokes upon the detested town he has quitted are those which he believes to exist. There is no honesty, no nobility in man, proof against this yellow slave, this damned earth which will “knit and break religions, bless the accursed, make the hoar leprosy

adored, place thieves on high and give them titled approbation." This belief in the existence of man's utter unworthiness is of prime importance in estimating Timon's character. It is needful to vindicate his misanthropy from being that of miserable spite. There is no doubt a mixture of personal resentment in his feeling, but his deep-rooted disparagement and contempt of man are founded upon a fixed belief in man's utter worthlessness. If men were noble and good, or if Timon could believe them so, he would not hate them; but they are all to his distempered mind either base in themselves or base in their subserviency to baseness. "Timon Atheniensis dictus interrogatus cur omnes homines odio prosequeretur: Malos, inquit, merito odi; cæteros ob id odi, quod malos non oderint."—*Erasmus*. This is not to hate man as he ought to be, nor even as he is, but as he appears in the false colours of mental derangement.

The character of Apemantus is skilfully managed to elicit the less selfish nature of Timon's misanthropy. In the one it is the result of a bad heart, in the other that of a perverted reason. If all men were true and good they would be the more offensive to the churlish disposition of Apemantus, who is an ingrained misanthrope, and as such is recognized and abhorred by Timon himself. He seeks Timon to vex him—"always a villain's office, or a fool's." He attributes Timon's conduct to the meanest motives,—a madman before, he is now a fool:

“This is in thee a nature but infected,
A poor unmanly melancholy sprung
From change of fortune.”

He recommends Timon to play the part he was undone by—that of a base flatterer ; and that he should turn rascal to have his wealth again, that he might again distribute it to rascals. He accuses him of being an imitator—“Thou dost affect my manners ;”—of putting on the sour cold habit of nakedness and melancholy from mere want, and of the capacity to be a courtier, were he not a beggar. Timon estimates the curish spirit which thus attacks him at its true value. “Why shouldst thou hate men ? they never flattered thee ?” He replies,

“If thou hadst not been born the worst of men,
Thou hadst been a knave and flatterer.”

Apemantus, indeed, is a real misanthrope, who judges of man by his own bad heart. It was necessary to the drama that he should speak his thoughts, but naturally such a man would only express his antagonism to mankind in his actions. Such misanthropes are too common ; every malevolent villain being, in fact, one of them, although selfishness in league with badness may counsel hypocrisy. Boileau recognises this in his lines on the malignant hypocrite of society :

“En vain ce misanthrope, aux yeux tristes et sombres,
Veut, par un air riant, en éclaircir les ombres :
Le ris sur son visage est en mauvaise humeur ;
L’agrément fuit ses traits, ses caresses font peur ;

Ses mots les plus flatteurs paroissent des rudesses,
Et la vanité brille en toutes ses bassesses."

Lord Shaftesbury, in the *Characteristics*, takes a view of misanthropy, which strictly accords with the character of Apemantus. He places it among "those horrid, monstrous, and unnatural affections, to have which is to be miserable in the highest degree." He writes :

"There is also among these a sort of hatred of mankind and society; a passion which has been known perfectly reigning among some men, and has had a peculiar name given to it, misanthropy. A large share of this belongs to those who have habitually indulged themselves in a habitual moroseness, or who, by force of ill-nature and ill-breeding, have contracted such a reverse of affability, and civil manners, that to see or meet a stranger is offensive. The very aspect of mankind is a disturbance to 'em, and they are sure always to hate at first sight."

Timon's contempt of the treasure of gold, which he discovers in his naked and houseless misery, marks his changed nature less than his entire disregard of the invitation of the senators to rank and power, and to be captain of Athens. Riches, for their own sake, he always placed at the lowest value. He now distributes them as moral poison. To Alcibiades, whom, following Plutarch's hint, he hates less than others, he gives it to whet the sword which threatens his country. To the courtesans he gives it, because they are the infecting curses of man.

"There's more gold;
So you damn others, and let this damn you,
And ditches grave you all!"

To Flavius he gives it tempting him to misanthropy; to the contemptible poet and painter, because they are villains; to the thieves, that in the poison of wine it may destroy them.

“Here’s gold. Go, suck the subtle blood o’ the grape,
‘Till the high fever seethe your blood to froth,
And so ‘scape hanging.”

Gold, which has been his own curse, has become in his eyes the curse of all. It is “the common whore of mankind.” His contemptuous distribution of the “yellow slave,” the “damned earth,” the “strong thief,” with blows and maledictions to the mean wretches who seek it from him, is the keenest satire upon the state of society, which for want of it has thrown him from its bosom.

It has been said both by Schlegel and Hazlitt that Timon is more a satire than a drama. This idea may have been derived from the limited development of character which it exhibits. Each character is placed clear and definitely formed in the page, and remains so. Timon’s alone undergoes one radical change, of which we see the effect rather than the transition. During the fourth and fifth acts the movements of the drama are solely devised with the intention of bringing the several personages under Timon’s withering denunciation.

There are, however, some passages which hint of change, and are more important than the more prominent and eloquent ones in affording an estimate of

Timon's mental state. By the other personages he is evidently regarded as mad. Alcibiades thus excuses his anathemas on the ladies of pleasure:

“Pardon him, sweet Timandra ; for his wits
Are drown'd and lost in his calamities.”

The good steward expresses wondering grief at the change in his appearance, the pregnant sign of the mind's disease :

“*Flavinius.* O you gods !
Is yond despised and ruinous man my lord ?
Full of decay and failing ? O monument
And wonder of good deeds evilly bestow'd !
What an alteration of honour
Has desperate want made !
What viler thing upon the earth than friends
Who can bring noblest minds to basest ends ?”

Even before this, life-weariness has suggested the intention of suicide ; the life-weariness of true mental disease, which is distinct from misanthropy, and has reference only to the individual. Misanthropy of opinion may be robust, egotistical, resisting, full of life. The misanthropy of melancholia is despairing and suicidal.

* “I am sick of this false world, and will love nought
But even the mere necessities upon’t.
Then, Timon, presently prepare thy grave ;
Lie where the light foam of the sea may beat
Thy grave-stone daily : make thine epitaph
That death in me at others' lives may laugh.”

It is, however, not certain whether Timon dies directly by his own hand, or indirectly by the misery

which he inflicts upon himself. The exposure described in such noble poetry by Apemantus out of place as it seems in his churlish mouth, "What, think'st that the bleak air thy boisterous chamberlain" etc., is in itself a kind of suicide, which has many a time and oft been resorted to by the insane. Indeed, of all forms of voluntary death, that of starvation is the most frequently attempted by them. Timon, however, does not actually refuse food; he digs for roots and eats them, while he regrets the necessity

"That nature being sick of man's unkindness
Should yet be hungry."—

Although his exposure to "desperate want," which hath made him almost unrecognizable to the loving eyes of his faithful steward, may from the first have been adopted for a suicidal purpose, it seems probable that the manner of his death was still more voluntary; for, however sensibly he might feel his failing health drawing to a close, it is not likely that on the day when he supported the animated dialogue with the senators he should be able positively to foretell his death from exhaustion on the morrow.

"Why, I was writing of my epitaph;
It will be seen to-morrow: my long sickness
Of health and living now begins to mend,
And nothing brings me all things."

After mocking the senators with the pretended patriotism of a public benefit, copied from the short notice

to be found in Plutarch, the invitation forsooth to the Athenian citizens to stop their afflictions by hanging themselves upon his tree, Timon takes his farewell of men and their deeds, in words pointing to a voluntary death, in a predetermined time and place :

“Come not to me again : but say to Athens,
Timon hath made his everlasting mansion
Upon the beached verge of the salt flood ;
Who once a day with his embossed froth
The turbulent surge shall cover : thither come,
And let my gravestone be your oracle.
Lips, let sour words go by and language end :
What is amiss plague and infection mend !
Graves only be men’s works and death their gain !
Sun, hide thy beams ! Timon hath done his reign.”

Suicide had not that place of honour among the Greeks which it afterwards obtained among the Romans, and at the present day has among that remote and strange people, the Japanese. Yet the duty of living and bearing one’s burden manfully was not fully recognized until a better religious faith instructed us that this life is but a state of preparation for another. The suicide of Timon, however, whether it is effected by exposure and want, or by more direct means, has no motive recognized even by the ancients as an excuse, and can only be attributed to the suggestions of a diseased mind.

Whether Shakespeare intended in Timon to describe the career of a madman is a question on which it is difficult, perhaps impossible, to come to a definite conclusion. The chief objection to the affirmative

would be, that all satire upon the hollowness of the world would lose much of its point if it came from the lips of an undoubted lunatic. This objection, however, loses somewhat of its validity, when it is remembered that in Lear Shakespeare actually has put such satire in the mouth of the maddest of his characters during the height of the disease; and that in his devotion to the truth of nature he would have represented such misanthropy as Timon's as a monstrous growth of the mind, if it be so.

Is it possible even in a state of disease? Is it actually met with? Undoubtedly, yes. Making allowance for the difference between the adorned descriptions of poetry and plain matter of fact, putting on one side the power of eloquent declamation, which belongs indeed not to the character but to the author, the professed misanthrope in word and in deed is met with among the insane, and, probably, among the insane only. This malignant and inhuman passion, for such it is, takes divers forms. Sometimes it is mere motiveless dislike; every one is obnoxious with or without cause, like Dr. Fell in the adage. This is the malignity of Apemantus expressing itself in conduct rather than in frank confession. The explanation of it is best given by Timon himself, that

*"Ira brevis furor est,
But this man 's always angry."*

If anger be identical with madness, except in its duration, this form of madness may be said to be a life-

long and universal anger. Another form of insanity, not uncommon in and out of lunatic asylums, approaches more nearly to the misanthropy of Timon ; namely, that form of chronic mental disease, whether it be called mania or melancholia, which constantly torments itself and others by attributing evil motives, not like Timon's to all ranks and classes of society, but to every individual with whom the unhappy being comes in contact. The poetical misanthropy of Timon is generalized, and cannot be said to point at any individual, unless it be Apemantus. The misanthropy of reality is individualized ; it points to all persons in turn, but to one only at a time.

This form of misanthropy may, and indeed often does, exist with none of the attributes of Insanity, but as the expression of that misleading influence which evil dispositions exercise over the judgment. In not unfrequent instances, however, it passes the limits of sanity, and presents all the features of mental disease. Hate and suspicion become constant and uncontrollable emotions ; belief in the misconduct of others develops into delusions, representing the commission of actual crimes ; and with these mental symptoms the physical indications of brain disease are not wanting. No task of psychological diagnosis, however, is so arduous as that of determining the point at which exaggerated natural disposition of any kind becomes actual disease ; but when the boundaries of sane mind are far left behind, difficulty and doubt vanish.

When sane malignity has developed into insane misanthropy, a remarkable change is sometimes seen in the habits of the man, resembling the self-inflicted miseries of Timon. The author once knew a gentleman whose educated and acute intellect occupied itself solely in the invention of calumnies against every person with whom he was brought into contact. This habit of mind was associated with utter negligence of the proprieties of life, and indeed of personal decency, so that it became absolutely requisite, for his own sake, that he should receive the protection of an asylum. A more close approximation to the misanthropy represented by the dramatist, because more general and uninfluenced by malign feeling, was, however, presented in the case of a poor creature, in whose expulsion from that which served for his cave the author took some part. For several years he had frequently passed by a desolate-looking house, which was believed to be uninhabited. Any strange thing, accompanied by change, strikes one's attention, but stranger things not so accompanied pass by unnoticed. So it was that this house remained in this state for years, without anyone asking why it was so. At length information was received that an insane person was incarcerated within its desolate-looking walls. In company with a Justice of the Peace the author obtained admission into the house, and, by forcing a door, into the chamber of the anchorite. Here in gloomy mistrust and dislike of all mankind he had

secluded himself for five years. Little of his history was known, except that he had travelled in all parts of the world, had returned to find great domestic affliction, and from that time had shut himself in one room ; the bare necessities of life being supplied to him by relatives who connived at his eccentricity, one of whom, scarcely more sane than himself, also occupied a room in this strange house. It is astonishing that, with a penurious diet and absence of all comfort, and an absolute want of fresh air and exercise, he retained health for so long a time. Had it not been for this self-inflicted misery and incarceration, it would have been difficult to certify that this poor man was insane. He disliked his fellow men, and shut himself up from them ; that was all. Although not a rich man, he had property ; and while it was under contemplation how he could be rescued from his voluntary misery, some relations took him under their kind protection. Had this man possessed the passionate eloquence of Timon, and been exposed to severe incitements to its use, by irritating invasions on his misanthropic privacy, he might have declaimed as Timon did—if Timon indeed did declaim ; if silence indeed is not the natural state of misanthropy, and all the eloquence of this drama that of the author rather than of the character.

The character which Shakespeare has delineated in Timon is remarkably enough the subject of the *chef d'œuvre* of French comedy. The Misanthrope

of Molière, however, is in many respects a very distinct personage from that of Shakespeare. So far from being susceptible to flattery and to the blandishments of prosperity, more than half of his quarrel with society is founded upon his abhorrence of this social falsehood. Although he loudly condemns general vices, and thus accounts for his retirement from the world,

“La raison, pour mon bien, veut que je me retire ;
Je n'ai point sur ma langue un assez grand empire,”

yet he detests private scandal, and reproaches his mistress for indulging in it. The dishonest praise and blame of individuals are equally hateful to his ears. The reason he assigns for his misanthropy, and its extent, are identical with those which Erasmus attributed to Timon ; in his anger he says, that his aversion to man admits of no exception :

“Non, elle est générale, et je hais tous les hommes ;
Les uns, parcequ'ils sont méchants et malfaisants,
Et les autres, pour être aux méchants complaisants.”

He hates all mankind, because they all come under the category of rogues or flatterers. He is, however, elevated above Timon in this, that the personal injuries he himself receives are not the cause of this hatred ; on the contrary, he treats them with a noble indifference. The character of Alceste is, on the whole, that of a magnanimous, truth-loving, truth-speaking man, misplaced in a court where servility and corruption are triumphant. His very defects, his

anger at vice and duplicity, and his promptness to express it, are those of a noble soul.

Rousseau has taken this view of the character in a severe criticism, to which he has exposed Molière for degrading the dramatic art, to pander to the corrupt morals of his age, in covering virtue with ridicule, and vice with false attractions. Other French writers have generally dissented from this condemnation, but Rousseau's letter to D'Alembert is a fine example of analytic criticism, not to be set aside by the sneering assertion, that he identified himself with this noble character, and felt his own vanity wounded in its unworthy treatment. Rousseau's estimate of it is irrefragably just and logical. If he has erred at all, it is in the opinion of the impression which the character of Alceste is calculated to make. His imprudent magnanimity may have been a subject of ridicule to the *parterre* of Molière's time, and doubtless was so; but this view of the character would be due less to the manner in which it is delineated, than to the corrupt morals and taste of that age. In better times it would be difficult to throw ridicule upon that which is intrinsically and morally excellent. An interesting anecdote, related by St. Simon, attests that this view of the character was even taken in Molière's own time by the person most interested in estimating it justly. The Duc de Montausier was generally recognized to be the original of the misanthrope, and was so indignant at the supposed insult that he threatened to

have Molière beaten to death for it. When the king went to see the play, M. Le Duc was compelled to go with him as his governor. After the performance the Duke sent for Molière, who was with difficulty brought to him, trembling from head to foot, expecting nothing less than death. M. Montausier, however, gave him a very different reception from that which he expected; he embraced him again and again, overwhelmed him with praises and thanks, for "if he had thought of him in drawing the character of the misanthrope, which was that of the most perfectly honest man possible, he had done him an honour which was only too great, and which he should never forget."

Rousseau seems to think not only that Alceste was not a misanthrope in the proper sense of the word, but that no sane man can be such. *

"One may say that the author has not ridiculed virtue in Alceste, but a true fault; that is to say, hatred of mankind. I reply, that it is not true that he has endowed his character with this hatred. The mere name of misanthrope must not be understood to imply that he who bears it is the enemy of the human race. A hatred of this kind would not be a defect, but a depravity of nature, and the greatest of all vices, since all the social virtues are connected with benevolence, and nothing is so directly contrary to them as inhumanity. The true misanthrope, if his existence were possible, would be a monster who would not make us laugh; he would excite our horror."

The true misanthrope, in fact, is such a character as Iago, a malevolent devil, without belief in any human goodness, without human sympathies, one who

has said in his heart, "evil, be thou my good." But the very nature of such inhuman hatred would impose not only silence as to evil thoughts, but hypocritical expression of humane sentiment. The honest wide-mouthed misanthropy of Timon is wholly explicable on neither of these theories. It is neither the rough garb of sincerity and virtue, as in Alceste, nor of inhuman hatred as in Iago. It is a medium between the two, inconsistent with sane mind, and explicable alone as a depravity and perversion of nature arising from disease. It is a form of insanity.

Aretæus, describing the conduct of maniacs "in the height of the disease," remarks, "some flee the haunts of men, and going into the wilderness live by themselves."

In Caius Cassius there is a fine psychological delineation of another character, who estimates man and his motives depreciatingly. Cassius is robustly sane and self-possessed, and therefore has little in common with Timon. He would approximate more closely to Jaques, did not the strong intermixture of spleen pickle him as it were from the contagion of melancholy. In Cæsar's unfriendly but graphic description he figures as the type of cynicism, except that the envy of ambition is attributed to him which the true cynic would despise.

"*Cæsar.* Let me have men about me that are fat :
Sleek-headed men and such as sleep o' nights :
Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look ;

He thinks too much : such men are dangerous.

Antony. Fear him not, Cæsar ; he's not dangerous ;
He is a noble Roman and well given.

Cæs. Would he were fatter ! But I fear him not :
Yet if my name were liable to fear,
I do not know the man I should avoid
So soon as that spare Cassius. He reads much ;
He is a great observer and he looks
Quite through the deeds of men ; he loves no plays,
As thou dost, Antony ; he hears no music ;
Seldom he smiles, and smiles in such a sort
As if he mock'd himself and scorn'd his spirit
That could be moved to smile at any thing.
Such men as he be never at heart's ease
Whiles they behold a greater than themselves,
And therefore are they very dangerous."

However true the dangerous nature of such men may be, in times when despotic power can only be attacked by conspiracy, it can scarcely be so when eloquence is the most formidable assailant of established authority. Sleep o' nights is needful to sustain the energy of the day, and a fat body is often associated with a well-nourished brain of best quality. The greatest orators and some of the greatest demagogues have at least indicated a proclivity to Falstaffian proportions ; witness Danton, Fox, O'Connell, John Bright, and the Bishop of Oxford. Falstaff, indeed, himself says, " Give me spare men and spare me great ones," but this was only for soldiers.

CONSTANCE.

CONSTANCE is delineated with Greek simplicity. The grandeur of one great passion is weakened by no subordinate parts of character on which the mind can rest and feel relief. All is simple and clear, like the one thrilling note of a trumpet, rising higher or falling lower, but never altering its tone. The wondrous eloquence in which the passion clothes itself does but display its force. Its unity and directness of purpose remain unchanging and unchangeable. Passion is not seen except when transformed into action. Like a great wind, it would be voiceless except for opposition; it would be viewless except for its effects. These may be a few tossed leaves, or a whirling cloud-rack, or the crash of forests. The invisible force remains the same, measured most imperfectly by the casualties of resistance.

But this passion itself, single in its onward force, is not altogether so in its nature and origin. It wears the garb of maternal affection, of the strong love a widowed mother bears to her only child; but, as in Queen Margaret, the fury of ambition is added: ambition for herself as much as for her son, which Elinor perceives, and with wounding truth expresses:

"Out, insolent ! thy bastard shall be king,
That thou mayst be a queen, and check the world!"

This fierce desire of power and place, which is but coldly expressed in the word ambition, is as undeniable in Constance as her mother's love. Had she no child she would be ambitious for herself. Having one, she is more vehemently ambitious for him, and indirectly for herself. The tenderness of love alone would have led her to shun contention and to withdraw her child from danger; as Andromache sought to withhold her husband from the field of honour with unalloyed womanly apprehension. But love influenced by ambition, and ambition stimulated by love, produced that compound passion which incurred all risks, braved all dangers. Combined passions are weak or strong, according to their perfection of union and singleness of purpose. If concurrent desires are but half of one mind, they pull diverse ways, and give rise to the weakness of inconsistency; but if they are thoroughly of one accord, chemically combined as it were, the product acquires new and irresistible strength. This force of compound emotion is finely developed in Constance, in contrast with the other female characters of the drama. Ambitious without love, she would have possessed the hard vigour of Elinor; loving without ambition, she would have been tenderly devoted like Blanch. Under the lash of the combined passion she is a fury, whom her boundless love and her deep woe barely suffice to redeem from our horror.

The first words of Constance are those of prudent advice, the suggestion of a strong vehement nature against the first move in the dread game of war. They contrast well with the ready boasts of coward Austria and feeble France :

“Stay for an answer to your embassy,
Lest unadvised you stain your swords with blood.”

It is the only tranquil speech which the poor woman is permitted to utter. The scolding match into which she immediately precipitates herself with Queen Elinor develops the irritability and vehemence of her temper. To Elinor's taunt of unchastity she replies with acrid *tu quoque* invective. She fairly overwhelms the queen-mother with vituperation, and does her best to merit the contemptuous entreaty of John, “Bedlam, have done!” and at length to earn the expostulations of her own friend.

“Elinor. Thou unadvised scold, I can produce
A will that bars the title of thy son.

Constance. Ay, who doubts that? a will! a wicked will;
A woman's will; a canker'd grandam's will!

K. Philip. Peace, lady! pause, or be more temperate:
It ill beseems this presence to cry aim
To these ill-tuned repetitions.”

She has already incurred the remonstrance of her gentle son.

“Arthur. Good my mother, peace!
I would that I were low laid in my grave:
I am not worth this coil that's made for me.”

Her very tenderness to her child is fierce, like that

of some she-beast of prey. Had there been no motive in the mother's heart but that of love, this appeal might well have checked not only the unbridled use of speech, but the dangerous course of action into which Constance throws herself. But at this period ambition is stronger than love, and it would be hard to say to what extent ambition for herself was not mixed up with that for her son. The scene affords clear insight into the natural character of Constance, as a proud ambitious woman, of irritable and ungoverned temper. The flight of her imagination, like that of her passion, is yet comparatively low. She roundly scolds her opponents indeed, but not until later is her unrivalled power of invective fully developed.

In nothing is Shakespeare's master-hand more evident than in the manner in which he lays a true and consistent foundation for his characters. To have built such an one as that of Constance on the basis of the common female virtues would have been monstrous. Constance, in whom fierce passion is not the result, but the cause of madness, could only have been from the beginning, what she is plainly shewn to have been, a haughty irascible woman, whose tongue and temper were dreaded by friend and foe.

Although accurate history has little to do with dramatic representation of character, it is worthy of remark, that the imperious claim of Constance to the crown of England for her son was not founded upon

that indefeasible right which would have been recognized at a later period. Mr. Foster in his *Historical Essays* remarks that,

“In England, while some might have thought Arthur’s hereditary claim superior to his uncle’s, there was hardly a man of influence, who at this period would have drawn the sword for him on any such principle as that the crown of England was heritable property. The genius of the country had been repugnant to any such notion. The Anglo-Saxon Sovereignty was elective, that people never sanctioning a custom by which the then personal and most arduous duties of sovereignty, both in peace and war, might pass of right to an infant or imbecile prince; and to the strength of this feeling in the country of their conquest the Normans heretofore had been obliged to defer.”

When the alliance between John and Philip has been determined, the latter enquires for Constance, and the Dauphin replies,

“She is sad and passionate in your highness’ tent.”

Philip thinks the peace “will give her sadness very little cure,” and in real apprehension asks his brother of England, “how we may content this widow lady?” John proposes to give up Bretagne and other dignities and powers to Arthur, and trusts in this manner to appease if not to satisfy her ambition and avert her vituperation :

“I trust we shall,
If not fill up the measure of her will,
Yet in some measure satisfy her so
That we shall stop her exclamation.”

John, however, had reckoned without his host; the lady’s will was not to be so readily satisfied, nor her

passionate exclamation so easily stopped. When Salisbury bears to her the message of the kings, and the information of their new compact, her rage knows no bounds, and the expression of it is as vehemently eloquent as that of her passionate grief when she has really lost all. Those who in deference to the sacred virtues of womanhood attribute all the language and conduct of Constance to the all-sanctifying motive of maternal love, will do well to remark that this passionate scene takes place while her son is with her and free from danger, except that which her own ambition prepares for him. Her rage arises from the thought that Blanch shall have those provinces instead of her son :

“Gone to be married ! gone to swear a peace !
False blood to false blood join’d ! gone to be friends !
Shall Lewis have Blanch, and Blanch those provinces ?
It is not so ; thou hast misspoke, misheard ;
Be well advised, tell o’er thy tale again :
It cannot be ; thou dost but say, ‘tis so :
I trust I may not trust thee ; for thy word
Is but the vain breath of a common man :
Believe me, I do not believe thee, man ;
I have a king’s oath to the contrary.
Thou shalt be punish’d for thus frightening me,
For I am sick and capable of fears,
Oppress’d with wrongs and therefore full of fears,
A widow, husbandless, subject to fears,
A woman, naturally born to fears ;
And though thou now confess thou didst but jest,
With my vex’d spirits I cannot take a truce,
But they will quake and tremble all this day.”

“O, if thou teach me to believe this sorrow,
Teach thou this sorrow how to make me die,

And let belief and life encounter so
As doth the fury of two desperate men
Which in the very meeting fall and die.
Lewis marry Blanch ! O boy, then where art thou ?
France friend with England, what becomes of me ?
Fellow, be gone : I cannot brook thy sight :
This news hath made thee a most ugly man."

In this violent language the spirit of disappointed ambition is paramount : ambition not only for Arthur but for herself, "What becomes of me?" The attack on Salisbury, the innocent messenger, so unworthy of a lady and a princess, can only be excused on the supposition that she is beside herself with fruitless rage, and vents it on any one within reach. It wants but little that she should turn her tongue or her hands even upon Arthur. When, alarmed by her fury, he interposes, "I do beseech you, madam, be content," she replies with a strange sophistry, which a true mother's heart would never employ, that if he were "grim, ugly, and slandrous to his mother's womb," etc.,

"I would not care, I then would be content,
For then I should not love thee, no, nor thou
Become thy great birth nor deserve a crown."

When was true mother's love ever measured by the beauty of her child? When did it not rather increase with the child's imperfections? Sacred miracle of nature, a mother's love hangs not on such casual gifts as form and beauty. The *crétin* idiot, hideous and half human, claims and receives more than its share. Even moral deformities cannot exhaust this unselfish

all-enduring fount of love ; as the reprobate son, the outcast of the family, knows full well, feeling that there is a bond holding him to one pure heart which can never loosen. But the love of Constance is alloyed with pride, and ambition, and selfishness. Not simply because Arthur is her son is he dear to her, but also because he is rightful heir to a crown, and because his beauty flatters her pride :

“ Of Nature’s gifts thou mayst with lilies boast
And with the half-blown rose.”

With the true selfishness of intense pride, she attributes the sufferance of all Arthur’s injuries to herself. She alone feels and must underbear the woes of disappointed ambition. She calls upon the peer whom she has so insolently and causlessly abused to assist in her vituperations :

“ Tell me, thou fellow, is not France foresworn ?
Envenom him with words, or get thee gone,
And leave those woes alone which I alone
Am bound to underbear.”

She will not go with Salisbury to the Kings. Did they know her truly they would never send for her. She is in an ecstasy of passion, which she miscalls grief and sorrow. The idea that she will make the huge firm earth the throne of this great emotion carries one beyond the earth in its grandeur. The intensity of her passion is almost satanic. Her humanity is alone vindicated by her subjection to its powers. Such passion in a questionable cause, moving

a strong nature, would excite only fear and abhorrence ; endured by a weak one it excites our extremest pity. Insanity alone redeems such passion to the kindred of womanhood, and is already foreshadowed in that culminating point where the extremes of pride and grief meet in the dust.

"I will instruct my sorrows to be proud ;
For grief is proud and makes his owner stoop.
To me and to the state of my great grief.
Let kings assemble ; for my grief's so great
That no supporter but the huge firm earth
Can hold it up : here I and sorrow sit ;
Here is my throne, bid kings come bow to it."

There is one word in the above quotations which must not pass without comment. Constance avows herself in ill health. "For I am *sick*." This point of physical disturbance is rarely omitted by Shakspeare in the development of insanity. It may be referred to in this instance in the most casual and careless manner, for the drama can take little cognizance of the physical imperfections of our nature. Still, however skilfully and imperceptible, the point is made. In a sick frame, passion like that of Constance would have fuller sway. The irritable nerves and the irritated mind would act and re-act on each other. Emotion would obtain more complete and disastrous empire.

When Constance, unobserved before, rises from the ground amidst the congratulating court, with the dignified and solemn denunciation of kingly treachery,

one of the finest possible dramatic effects is produced with the simplest means. Her eloquence throughout this scene is magnificent. The interests even of kingdoms seem below its lofty aim. The truth of kings, and, as a minor term, the truth of all other men, is counterfeit. The invocation to the Heavens, that they should arm for her, and be husband to her, and set discord betwixt these perjured kings, is the climax of eloquence. To Austria's entreaty, "Lady Constance, peace;" she replies in utter forgetfulness of all miseries except her own :

"War ! war ! no peace ! peace is to me a war."

No idea of the Pythoness, or of any woman inspired by good or evil influences, ever represented a more extatic state of eloquent emotion. The poet's own representation of inspired insanity, Cassandra in Troilus and Cressida, is tame and indistinct in comparison :

"Cry Trojans, cry ! Lend me ten thousand eyes
And I will fill them with prophetic tears," etc.

Constance descends from this exalted strain to wither Austria with her unmatched powers of vituperation, in which she does not even disdain a ridiculous image :

"Thou wear a lion's hide ! doff it for shame,
And hang a calf's-skin on those recreant limbs."

The war she invokes is near at hand in the "holy errand" of the Legate. When this clerical despot pours the vials of the church's wrath on the head

of John, who “blasphemes” in terms of English patriotism and protestantism, Constance must vie with the curses of authority, for which there’s “law and warrant.”

“*Constance.* O, lawful let it be
That I have room with Rome to curse a while !
Good father cardinal, cry thou amen
To my keen curses ; for without my wrong
There is no tongue hath power to curse him right.”

Afterwards she only contributes short sentences to the dialogue, so pregnant with mighty interest ; but they are artfully conceived to incline the wavering mind of King Philip and Lewis to the warlike decision she so ardently desires, and they are expressed with fierce unity of purpose. As she has imprecated from heaven the bloody arbitrament of battle, she invokes hell itself to alarm the timid soul of Philip :

“Look to that, devil ; lest that France repent,
And by disjoining hands, hell lose a soul.”

Lewis she taunts with his unfledged bride, and the coyness of his honour. Her passion stimulates her lofty intellect, and enables her to suggest in the strongest possible manner to each person the motive likely to weigh most.

She gains her purpose, and the issue of war is to decide her rights. Blanch, with true woman’s heart, laments for the sake of those she loves simply and for themselves. To her,

“The sun’s o’ercast with blood.”

But Constance, to whom peace is war, war is of all things most welcome, as the means to the end of her ambition, her fiendish ambition. May those who seek for war ever bear its heaviest penalties. May the general murderer feel the truth of Pandulph's assertion of the particular one:

“For he that steeps his safety in true blood,
Shall find but bloody safety and untrue.”

So it is with Constance. She loses her cause and her son, and the passion of ambitious love now appears in the form of grief, perhaps of remorse.

When all purpose of ambition is at an end, and even the chief object of it lost, its instigations are no longer predominant in the poor woman's heart. In the prostrating grief she now endures there is no thought of the lost kingdom ; one monster grief, like Aaron's rod, devours all smaller ones ; there is from henceforth only one thought, one feeling, one mental object, one fixed idea,—that her son is for ever lost. King Philip recognizes in her one already dead to the world :

“Look, who comes here ! a grave unto a soul !
Holding the eternal spirit, against her will,
In the vile prison of afflicted breath.”

Constance taunts him with his and her own calamities as the result of his peace, whereas they were in reality the issue of her war. This is the only point on which her quick intellect ever trips. She shews no signs of bending, though her spirit is wounded unto death.

Her invincible pride rejects all comfort, all solace. The charnel-house ideas of her invocation to death is poetic delirium, the frenzy of imagination. Juliet's imagination, embracing the same ideas, is feeble and prosaic compared with this horror :

“ No, I defy all counsel, all redress,
But that which ends all counsel, true redress,
Death, death ; O amiable lovely death !
Thou odoriferous stench ! sound rottenness !
Arise forth from the couch of lasting night,
Thou hate and terror to prosperity,
And I will kiss thy detestable bones
And put my eyeballs in thy vaulty brows
And ring these fingers with thy household worms
And stop this gap of breath with fulsome dust
And be a carrion monster like thyself :
Come, grin on me, and I will think thou smilest
And buss thee as thy wife. Misery’s love,
O, come to me ! ”

In her fierce unconquerable pride she would make death itself obey her as a vassal, and would shake the world even in leaving it :

“ O, that my tongue were in the thunder’s mouth !
Then with a passion would I shake the world,
And rouse from sleep that fell anatomy.”

Pandulph tells her plainly that she is mad, and rouses that eloquent defence of her reason, in which she repeats the test of madness which Lear applies to himself, the recognition of personal identity; and in which she expresses the same idea of madness as a refuge from sorrow, which Gloucester does :

“ *Pandulph.* Lady, you utter madness, and not sorrow.
Constance. Thou art not holy to belie me so ; ”

I am not mad : this hair I tear is mine ;
 My name is Constance ; I was Geffrey's wife ;
 Young Arthur is my son, and he is lost :
 I am not mad : I would to heaven I were !
 For then, 'tis like I should forget myself :
 O, if I could, what grief should I forget !
 Preach some philosophy to make me mad,
 And thou shalt be canonized, cardinal ;
 For being not mad but sensible of grief,
 My reasonable part produces reason
 How I may be deliver'd of these woes,
 And teaches me to kill or hang myself :
 If I were mad, I should forget my son,
 Or madly think a babe of clouts were he :
 I am not mad ; too well, too well I feel
 The different plague of each calamity."

(This supposed test of sanity, the preservation of the sense of personal identity, is used in the same manner by Sebastian in Twelfth Night, to assure himself that in the strange enjoyment of Olivia's favours he is neither dreaming nor doting.)

"Sebastian. This is the air ; that is the glorious sun ;
 This pearl she gave me, I do feel't, and see't ;
 And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
 Yet 'tis not madness. Where's Antonio, then ?
 I could not find him at the Elephant :
 Yet there he was ; and there I found this credit,
 That he did range the town to seek me out.
 His counsel now might do me golden service ;
 For though my soul disputes well with my sense,
 That this may be some error, but no madness,
 Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
 So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
 That I am ready to distrust mine eyes
 And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
 To any other trust but that I am mad
 Or else the lady's mad ; yet, if 't were so,

She could not sway her house, command her followers,
Take and give back affairs and their dispatch
With such a smooth, discreet and stable bearing
As I perceive she does : there 's something in 't
That is deceivable."

It is however no better a test of madness than that applied by Cassio to prove his state of sobriety : "Do not think, gentlemen, I am drunk : this is my Ancient ; This is my right hand, and this is my left."

Angrily as Constance rejects the idea of madness, yet she is mad ; the very type of acute reasoning mania. In real life the intellect would scarcely be so consistent and consecutive in its operations ; but in real life neither sane nor insane people talk blank verse, and express even their deepest emotions in the magnificent imagery which great poets use. The raving of maniacal frenzy, in which the emotions are exclusively involved, would be represented by short and broken sentences, in which every link in the idea chain would not be expressed, and which would therefore represent, more or less, the features of incoherence. The poet fills up these chasms in the sense, and clothes the whole in the glowing language of excited intellectual power ; and thus we have in Constance the representation of a frenzied woman, speaking with more arrangement of ideas than frenzy really permits. King Philip bids her bind up her tresses, which she has been madly tearing with her own hands to prove herself not mad. These tresses,

"Where but by chance a silver drop hath fallen,"

she will bind up as she is bid ; she will even do this in fanciful reference to the one subject of all thought, her son's imprisonment :

“ I tore them from their bonds, and cried aloud
‘ O that these hands could so redeem my son,
As they have given these hairs their liberty ?
But now I envy at their liberty,
And will again commit them to their bonds,
Because my poor child is a prisoner.”

The despairing cry of overwhelming misery, which can apprehend no hope even in heaven, expresses itself in the fancy that she can never again see her son even beyond the grave, for canker sorrow will change him :

“ And so he'll die ; and, rising so again,
When I shall meet him in the court of heaven
I shall not know him : therefore never, never
Must I behold my pretty Arthur more.”

Her last words indicate a state of hallucination. Grief represents her son's voice and figure to her senses. Or if this be not taken literally, it at least represents one manner in which hallucination is produced. An absorbing emotion constantly directs the attention to one idea-image. This creation of the mind at length becomes accepted by the sense as a reality, and the hallucination of insanity exists. This differs however, in its origin and its significance, from the form of hallucination arising from some abnormal state of the nerves of sense merely, which may exist, as it did in Ben Jonson and Nicolai, without

any deviation from a sound state of mental health. If the lively representation of Arthur's presence be not intended to convey the idea of actual hallucination, it at least expresses the complete dominion which an absorbing emotion attains over the attention and mental conception.

"*K. Philip.* You are as fond of grief as of your child.

Constance. Grief fills the room up of my absent child,
Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me ;
Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,
Remembers me of all his gracious parts,
Stuffs out his vacant garments with his form ;
Then, have I reason to be fond of grief ?
Fare you well : had you such a loss as I,
I could give better comfort than you do.
I will not keep this form upon my head,
When there is such disorder in my wit.

[Tearing off her head-dress.

O Lord ! my boy, my Arthur, my fair son !
My life, my joy, my food, my all the world !
My widow-comfort, and my sorrow's cure !

"*K. Phi.* I fear some outrage, and I'll follow her."

The frightful spectacle of acute mania pursuing its course to a fatal end was no fit subject for dramatic representation. Shakespeare exhibited the growing horror to the extreme limit which decent regard to human weakness permitted, and then mercifully drew the veil. The spectacle of sleepless nights and restless days, of fierce raving and desperate outrage until exhausted nature sinks, this he could not well exhibit to the public gaze. In one short line alone he tells the story.

"The ~~lady~~ Constance in a frenzy died."

This concealment of the horrors of furious mania, although their existence is indicated, has its parallel in the treatment of the death of the Queen in *Cymbeline*. The strong mind of this bad woman, one who “bears down all with her brain,” is lost in maniacal frenzy, brought on by the disappointment of her schemes. She lies “upon a desperate bed,” with

“A fever from the absence of her son ;
Madness of which her life’s in danger.”

The horror of the desperate bed is withheld. Its termination only is recorded with the frenzied confession of her wickedness. In the flush of victory the King is accosted by Cornelius, the good and discreet physician, who had baffled the Queen’s intended poisonings.

“Hail, great king !
To sour your happiness, I must report
The queen is dead.

Cymbeline. Whom worse than a physician
Would this report become ? But I consider,
By medicine life may be prolong’d, yet death
Will seize the doctor too. How ended she ?

Cornelius. With horror, madly dying, like her life,
Which, being cruel to the world, concluded
Most cruel to herself.”

The death of the noble-minded wife of Brutus is a distant terror like that of Constance. Impatience at the absence of her husband, and grief at the growing power of his enemies, induce the frenzy of despair and suicide :

“With this ~~she~~ fell distract,
And her attendants absent, swallowed fire.”

In all the deaths of all the plays, a long bill of mortality indeed, there is only one instance in which all the horrors of a bad end are laid bare, namely, in that of the Cardinal Beaufort. In King John's death physical anguish alone is expressed, and this with such beauty and force of language as to veil the foul reality of death by a corrosive poison.

Constance even more than Lear establishes the fact that Shakespeare held the origin and nature of insanity to be emotional. Until the last there is no delusion, scarcely a deviation from correct reasoning, and yet she is conducted through a tempest of emotional disturbance into the very midst of maniacal excitement. All the causes of her disease are purely emotional. The predisposing cause is her fiercely passionate disposition. The exciting cause is grief. The symptoms are the same as the causes, transformed into abnormal conditions of degree. Disorder in the wit is felt, but scarcely exhibited. Loss of control over the operations of the intellect is manifested in the last speech only, or perhaps also in the disconnected expression preceding, "To England if you will." Nature is above art, as Lear says, and a truth now appreciated by science needs not the support of opinion even from so great an artist as Shakespeare. But perfect art is founded upon science, the science of exact observation at least, and to such a test there can be little doubt that this character was submitted in the crucible of the poet's great brain,

before it was moulded into that form of fierce power and beauty in which it excites our admiration and awe. The wondrous eloquence of Constance is second to that of no other character except Lear. It would seem that Shakespeare revels in the free swing of fancy, in the repudiation of all mental restraint which madness justifies. He uses these characters as the motley favourites of old courts were often used, to speak bitter truth without fear or favour, without hesitation or retention, without prudential subtraction or self-seeking after thought. The madmen of Shakespeare are his broadest exponents of humanity.

In the development of the insanity of Constance the power of passion finds a potent ally in that of imagination. Imagination, that creative faculty which paints in the mind's eye those images which in health may be dismissed at will, but which in disease haunt the oppressed brain with their importunate presence. The faculty of forming sensational ideas without the intervention of the external senses, is one which, if not kept in subjection to a sober judgment, is more perilous to mental health than aught else except unbridled passion. In actual insanity this function runs riot, and the world of reality is supplanted by that of fancy. This idea is most beautifully expressed in *Midsummer Night's Dream*:

“ ‘Tis strange, my Theseus, that these lovers speak of
Theseus. More strange than true: I never may believe
These antique fables, nor these fairy toys.
Lovers and madmen have such seething brains,

Such shaping fantasies, that apprehend
More than cool reason ever comprehends.
The lunatic, the lover, and the poet
Are of imagination all compact :
One sees more devils than vast hell can hold,
That is, the madman : the lover, all as frantic,
Sees Helen's beauty in a brow of Egypt :
The poet's eye, in a fine frenzy rolling,
Doth glance from heaven to earth, from earth to heaven ;
And as imagination bodies forth
The forms of things unknown, the poet's pen
Turns them to shapes and gives to airy nothing
A local habitation and a name.
Such tricks hath strong imagination,
That, if it would but apprehend some joy,
It comprehends some bringer of that joy ;
Or in the night, imagining some fear,
How easy is a bush supposed a bear?"

The best commentary on this is again to be found in the pages of that acute and original thinker, the author of the *Characteristics*, who directly traces the origin of insanity to this very excess of the imaginative faculty uncorrected by the judgment.

"This, indeed, is but too certain ; that as long as we enjoy a mind, as long as we have appetites and sense, the fancies of all kinds will be hard at work ; and whether we are in company or alone, they must range still, and be active. They must have their field. The question is, whether they shall have it wholly to themselves ; or whether they shall acknowledge some controller or manager. If none, 'tis this I fear which leads to madness. 'Tis this, and nothing else which can be call'd madness, or loss of reason. For if fancy be left judge of anything, she must be judge of all. Everything is right, if anything be so, because I fancy it. 'The house turns round. The prospect turns. No, but my head turns indeed, I have a giddiness ; that's all. Fancy would persuade me thus and thus, but I know better.'

"Tis by means therefore of a controller and corrector of fancy, that I am saved from being mad. Otherwise, 'tis the house turns, when I am giddy. 'Tis things which change (for so I must suppose) when my passion merely or temper changes. But I was out of order. I dreamt. Who tells me this? Who besides the correctrice, by whose means I am in my wits, and without whom I am no longer myself?"

There are many passages in Shakespeare sufficiently illustrative of these remarks.

"And so, with great imagination
Proper to madmen, led his powers to death
And winking leap'd into destruction."

King Henry IV., II.

"He that is giddy thinks the world turns round."
Taming the Shrew.

This distinction between the mind directed by fancy under the sway of the senses, and the appeal from thence to reason, is directly asserted in the *Winter's Tale*.

<i>Camillo.</i> <i>Florizel.</i> I am, and by my fancy : if my reason Will thereto be obedient, I have reason ; If not, my senses, better pleased with madness, Do bid it welcome."	Be advised. I am, and by my fancy : if my reason Will thereto be obedient, I have reason ; If not, my senses, better pleased with madness, Do bid it welcome."
---	--

What is this corrector or controller of fancy? It is somewhat begging the question to reply that it is the reason; for reason is often held to include all the intellectual operations, and among them the one to be controlled. The real umpire appears to be the faculty of comparison, by which the unrealities of imagination, or the misrepresentations of perverted

sensation, are contrasted with the knowledge derived from experience. Shakespeare somewhere remarks, that after one has looked fixedly at the sun, all things appear green. If this appearance continued, the mental preservative against belief in its reality would be, the comparison of present impressions with the memory of the past, the testimony of others, and a grounded belief in the unchangeability of nature.

In the greater number of delusive appearances one sense corrects another; but when all the senses and all the circumstances of time and place combine to affirm the reality of some transaction, it is difficult to see from whence the corrective may come. If the sensations of dreaming were as clear and consistent as those of the waking state, how would men be able to distinguish the memory of their dreams from those of their real actions? There is a curious passage bearing on this point in *Troilus and Cressida*. The young lover has just witnessed the falsehood of his mistress. He cannot at first believe the evidence of his senses, and argues against his misery, by combating the testimony of his eyes and ears with that of his affections.

“*Ulysses*. All’s done, my lord.

Troilus. It is.

Ulyss. Why stay we, then?

Tro. To make a recordation to my soul
Of every syllable that here was spoke.
But if I tell how these two did co-act,
Shall I not lie in publishing a truth?

Sith yet there is a credence in my heart,
 An esperance so obstinately strong,
 That doth invert the attest of eyes and ears,
 As if those organs had deceptive functions,
 Created only to calumniate.
 Was Cressid here?

Ulyss. I cannot conjure, Trojan.

Tro. She was not, sure.

Ulyss. Most sure she was.

Tro. Why, my negation hath no taste of madness.

Thersites. Will he swagger himself out on's own eyes?

Tro. This is not she. O madness of discourse,
 That cause sets up with and against itself!
 Bi-fold authority! where reason can revolt
 Without perdition, and loss assume all reason
 Without revolt: this is, and is not, Cressid.
 Within my soul there doth conduce a fight
 Of this strange nature that a thing inseparable
 Divides more wider than the sky and earth,
 And yet the spacious breadth of this division
 Admits no orifice for a point as subtle
 As Ariachne's broken woof to enter."

The arguments of Macbeth against the unreal mockeries of the phantom rest upon a like foundation; but somehow or other, and despite of all the philosophy of Bishop Berkeley, there does exist in the same mind means of distinguishing between appearance and reality. And the mode of reasoning is generally very simple.

"The Spanish fleet you cannot see because
 It is not yet in sight."—*The Critic.*

THE MELANCHOLY JAQUES.

“And melancholy marked him for her own.”

“The melancholy Jaques” is another phase of the Hamlet character, contemplated under totally different circumstances. There is the same contemplative cast of thought on the frailties of man exercising itself in obedience to a depressed state of emotion. In Jaques this has not been the result of sudden revulsion of feeling, of some one great grief, which has, as it were, overspread the heavens with a pall. It is of more gradual and wholesome growth, the result of matured intellect and exhausted desire. Jaques is an “old man,” or at least old enough to be called so by the rustic lass in her anger of disappointment; and he himself indirectly attributes his melancholy to his wide knowledge of the world.

“It is a melancholy of mine own, compounded of many simples, extracted from many objects, and indeed the sundry contemplation of my travels, in which my often rumination wraps me in a most humorous sadness.” “Yes, I have gained my experience.”

It is thus he hath gained knowledge, but not

wisdom ; unless wisdom be truly described in that line of the poet, which says that it enables us

“To see all others’ faults and feel our own.”

He does indeed suffer from more than intellectual depreciation of man’s sensuality. He has wallowed in it himself, and if he feels not the acute sting of remorse, he endures the dull ache of exhaustion. To use a term now almost naturalized among us, he is thoroughly *blasé* with licentious freedom. He has squandered his means and exhausted the powers of enjoyment ; having been forgetful that moderation is the true epicureanism of enjoyment, he will now rail upon the pleasures of the world in the false stoicism of disgust. Falstaff says that old men “measure the heat of our livers by the bitterness of their own gall ;” but in Jaques it is the heat of his own liver which has embittered the gall of his opinion. He says

“Invest me in my motley ; give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine.

Duke. Fie on thee ! I can tell what thou wouldest do.

Jaques. What, for a counter, would I do but good ?

Duke. Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin :
For thou thyself hast been a libertine,
As sensual as the brutish sting itself ;
And all the embossed sores and headed evils,
That thou with license of free foot hast caught,
Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world.”

The contrast of this philosophy with the nobler one of the banished Duke, which leads him to discover

the sweet uses of adversity, and to find good in everything, is all in favour of the latter; for the loving humanity of the Duke, as contemplative in its way as the cynicism of Jaques is felt to be that of goodness, and nobleness, and truth; while that of Jaques is made to throw, not only on his thoughts, but on himself, that tinge of ridicule which belongs to perverse exaggeration. His general cynicism, however, is combined with tenderness of heart; he grieves even at the physical pain endured by brutes; and the moral evil of the world, which he sees through and through, pains and distresses him. The selfishness which makes worldlings bequeath wealth to the rich, and which makes "misery part the flux of company," and the prosperous to look with contempt upon the wretched, is to him not a source of hatred, but of sorrow.

"Most invectively he pierceth through
The body of the country, city, court,"

but his invectives are half erased with tears. Jaques' melancholy is no affectation, though he "loves it better than laughing," "and can suck it out of a song, as a weasel sucks eggs." Although his intimate knowledge of mankind, and his sententious power of expression, and his perverse ingenuity in representing things awry, make his company an intellectual feast, so that the Duke says,

"I love to cope him in these sullen fits,
For then he's full of matter,"

he feels no vain pleasure in the display, and avoids the disputation and collision of wit which the Duke so much enjoys.

"Jaques. And I have been all this day to avoid him. He is too disputable for my company : I think of as many matters as he, but I give heaven thanks and make no boast of them."

He is as far from being unsocial as he is from being really misanthropic. He delights in the gay Amiens and his songs, though he does suck melancholy from them. He fancies Orlando, sees no fault in him, except "to be in love," and invites his companionship "to rail against our mistress the world and all our misery." He almost solicits friendship with Rosalind ; and to Touchstone he cleaves as to a grotesque image of his own thoughts: There is no trace in him of that terrible selfishness which distinguishes melancholy when it has become disease. The sensual sources of selfishness have been dried up in him, and the intellectual ones are frozen by his ingrain cynicism. He is more disposed to solitude than disputation, to silence than to intellectual display, seeing that "'tis good to be sad and say nothing." The most subtle of all vanities, that of mental power, is absent, and the two or three long speeches he makes are but the spontaneous expression of his contemplation. If this contemplation paints itself in sad colours, it is singularly free from personal animosity. This is finely expressed in his reply to the

accusation of the Duke, that he would commit sin in chiding sin.

"Jaques. Why, who cries out on pride,
That can therein tax any private party?
Doth it not flow as hugely as the sea,
Till that the weary very means do ebb?
What woman in the city do I name,
When that I say the city-woman bears
The cost of princes on unworthy shoulders?"

The motive for this general censure of vice is, indeed, as wide apart from that of individual slander, as benevolence is from malice. The tenderest love of which the world's history bears record, denounced and unsparingly lashed all vice, but the woman taken in adultery was told to "go and sin no more."

The Duke always appears unduly severe in his estimate of Jaques' humour. He has accused him of "sullen fits," of being "compact of jars," of deriving his disgust of life from used-up libertinism ; and after Orlando's famishing appeal for pity and sustenance, he does him the injustice to refer the cause of his sadness to the feeling of personal misery.

"Duke. Thou seest we are not all alone unhappy :
This wide and universal theatre
Presents more woeful pageants than the scene
Wherein we play in."

Jaques replies in that epitome of life in twenty-eight lines, describing the seven ages of man, the condensed wisdom of which has become "familiar as household words." It affords a complete though indirect refutation to the Duke's implied reproach, and

distinctly lays the wide basis of his philosophy on human life at large. It is to be remarked that there is neither anger nor malice in this description of life. It merely represents the shady side of truth. The weakness of infancy, the pains of education, the woes of love, the dangers of glory, the pedantry of mature authority, the meanness of aged frugality, and the wretchedness of decay, these are the aspects of life given in brief sentences, each of which is like a picture in outline from the pencil of Retzsch. But life has another aspect : infancy has its pleasures of sense and its beauty ; boyhood, its buoyancy and fun ; love, its joys ; war, its glory ; and age, its honourable worth. Only in the last scene of all, when decay and rottenness claim the yet living ruins of mind and body, is there no redeeming compensation :

“ Last scene of all,
That ends this strange eventful history,
Is second childishness and mere oblivion,
Sans teeth, sans eyes, sans taste, sans every thing.”

But how few who start in life reach this melancholy part of the course, more painful to behold perhaps than to endure. Infancy mewling and pewking, or crowing with laughter, is abundant as flowers in spring, but the living decay of second childhood is a prodigy.

The delight which Jaques takes in the quaint humour of Touchstone is partly owing to the attraction which that singular compound of wit and folly

has for one whose curiosity to know all varieties of character is as keen as that of an antiquarian or a naturalist for some strange or new thing, and partly to the satire on human life expressed in the fool's sallies. Touchstone is second only in the aristocracy of Shakespeare's fools, subordinate only to him, hight of Lear, whose younger brother he might well be, more robust in health and coarse in humour, but with the selfsame faculty of turning wisdom into folly and folly into wisdom, of levelling pretension by ridicule, and exposing the naked absurdity of false honour. The philosophy of folly is more broad, uncleanly, and rabelaisian in the expression which it receives from Touchstone than from the fool in Lear, but it is the same in effect, and as such is delightful to Jaques. He delights in him, and entreats the Duke to do so likewise. "Good my Lord, like this fellow." He goes out of his way to counsel him against his false marriage and its effects, when the wood so greenly put together will warp, warp.

Jaques indeed displays a greedy appetite for all knowledge of human nature. He hunts after peculiarities and revels in the chase; as Shakespeare himself must have done, to have acquired that wonderful collection of game and vermin which he has transmitted to us in the vast museum of his dramas. That Jaques, with all his contempt of mankind in general, really loves man in the particular, is proved by his last speech:

"Jaques. Sir, by your patience. If I heard you rightly,
The duke hath put on a religious life
And thrown into neglect the pompous court?

Jaq. de Boys. He hath.

Jaq. To him will I : out of these convertites
There is much matter to be heard and learn'd.

[*To Duke*] You to your former honour I bequeath ;
Your patience, and your virtue well deserves it :

[*To Orlando*] You to a love that your true faith doth merit :

[*To Oliver*] You to your land and love and great allies :

[*To Silvius*] You to a long and well-deserved bed :

[*To Touchstone*] And you to wrangling ; for thy loving voyage
Is but for two months victuall'd. So, to your pleasures :
I am for other than for dancing measures."

In this he does full justice to all, even to poor Touchstone, whose perverse match he has not been able to prevent. If he is not for dancing measures, it is because the gay cloak of ceremonious amusement would conceal that which he hungers after, the heart of man ; because it would afford a less fruitful field of observation than the words and works of the Duke, so recently converted from the wicked enjoyment of worldly power. Jaques really has no thorough want of belief in human goodness, and in his own heart there is so much of it that he is quite unable to support consistently the part of scoffer, much less that of misanthrope.

"With too much knowledge for the sceptic's side,
With too much weakness for the stoic's pride,
He hangs between ;"

between his general theory of man, painted in the sombre colours of his own emotional sadness, and

his love of individual men. Instigated not less by his own goodness of heart than by his profound knowledge of the strength and weakness of men, their good and evil, their virtue and vice, mixed human nature receives from him more pity than contempt.

Jaques leaves upon the mind the impression that he was not insane. In him judgment remained master of the direction of thought, and the dilatation of feeling. It is true he cherished his melancholy, but if he had thought fit to do so, he retained the power to oppose, if not to repress it. Herein appears to exist the psychical distinction between the sane and the insane melancholist; a distinction which it may often be very difficult if not impossible to establish, but the only one which can be safely propounded, and which must be constantly borne in mind and sought for even when it cannot be found. The still more essential difference, that in one case there is cerebral disease, and that in the other there is not, can only be proved by the symptoms of disease, which are often obscure or concealed.

But if Jaques was sane, it cannot also be said that he was safe. The voluntary indulgence of melancholy is a perilous experiment. Health may carry a man through it, as it will carry one through the miasm of a marsh reeking with ague, or through the pestilential breath of a fever ward. But if under any change of circumstances health should fail, or the virulence of the poison be increased, the resistance would in one

case, as in the other, be eventually overpowered. If Jaques had fallen on the bed of sickness, or under the dark shadow of real grief, it is probable that his fantastic melancholy would have been converted into the melancholia of disease, which, assimilating all things unto itself, would first have defied, and finally have subjugated the reason, and have given him cause to exclaim with Messala :

“O hateful error, melancholy’s child,
Why dost thou shew to the apt thoughts of men
The things that are not.”

There are few words which have been used both by Shakespeare and others in such various and different senses as *melancholey*. The history of words is the history of thought, and a complete account of the life and adventures of this word, from its birth in Greek physics, its development through philosophy and poetry, to its present state of adult vigour in the prose of every-day life, would be an interesting excitation, but neither an easy nor a brief one. Originally employed to express a medical theory of the ancients on the origin of madness, it has singularly enough been used to denote the most opposite emotional states. Choler signifies anger, a meaning upon which Shakespeare frequently quibbles ; but melan-choler, black choler, means the opposite of anger, namely emotional depression. It has however only recently settled into this signification. The learned Prichard asserts that the ancient writers attached to

it no idea of despondency, but only that of madness in general. Dr. Daniel Tuke, however, points out that in this opinion Prichard has not displayed his usual accuracy. "Hippocrates in one of his aphorisms says, 'If fear or distress continue for a long time, this is a symptom of melancholy.' And in other places he distinguished melancholy from mania by the absence of violence; at other times, however, he applies the word to madness in general. Modern writers before Esquirol used the word melancholy to convey the idea of derangement *on* some particular point, whether accompanied by gloom or mirth. Thus Cullen included under melancholy 'hallucinations about the prosperous' as well as 'the dangerous condition of the body'; and Dr. Good speaks of 'a self-complacent melancholy.'" Other writers appear to have used the term in a non-medical sense, with equal diversity of meaning. Thus Henry More makes melancholy synonymous with enthusiasm:

"It is a strong temptation with a melancholist when he feels a storm of devotion and zeal come upon him like a mighty wind—all that excess of zeal and affection, and fluency of words is most palpably to be resolved into the power of melancholy, which is a kind of natural inebriation"—"the vapour and fumes of melancholy partake of the nature of wine."

Milton uses the word melancholy in the sense of contemplative thought, and invokes and deifies the emotion in *Il Penseroso*:

"But hail thou goddess, sage and holy,
Hail divinest melancholy."

Since then the term has been gradually settling down into its present meaning of emotional dejection. It is not however properly used even now to signify a morbid state, unless periphrasis for that purpose be made use of; and care should be taken, which is not always done, to distinguish between melancholy and melancholia, the latter being the proper technical term applied to a form of mental disease.

Shakespeare uses the word melancholy with many modifications in its meaning, but with far less of laxity than that employed by other authors, and in a sense more approaching that of melancholia. In *Love's Labour Lost*, the grandiloquent Spaniard in his letters to the King uses the term in its strictly medical sense :

“Besieged with sable-coloured melancholy, I did commend the black-oppressing humour to the most wholesome physic of thy health-giving air.”

In the following scene the question is actually mooted, though unfortunately not determined, of the difference between sadness and melancholy.

“*Armado*. Boy, what sign is it when a man of great spirit grows melancholy?

Moth. A great sign, sir, that he will look sad.

Arm. Why, sadness is one and the selfsame thing, dear imp.

Moth. No, no; O lord, sir, no.

Arm. How canst thou part sadness and melancholy, my tender juvenal?

Moth. By a familiar demonstration of the working, my tough senior.”

King John, in that fine scene where he tempts Hubert to the murder of his nephew, says :

“Or if that surly spirit, melancholy,
Had baked thy blood and made it heavy-thick,
Which else runs trickling up and down the veins,
Making that idiot, laughter, keep men’s eyes
And strain their cheeks to idle merriment.”

In *Twelfth Night* the surly spirit is supposed to perform another culinary process. Fabian says, “If I lose a scruple of this sport, let me be boiled to death with melancholy.”

In *Taming the Shrew*, the physicians are said to recommend the pleasant comedy to Christopher Sly, on the grounds that,

“Seeing too much sadness hath congeal’d your blood,
And melancholy is the nurse of frenzy :
Therefore they thought it good you hear a play
And frame your mind to mirth and merriment,
Which bars a thousand harms and lengthens life.”

In Viola’s touching description of the effects of concealed love, the black spirit is made to assume a new livery, in a manner which proves Shakespeare to have been conversant with the appearances at least of chlorosis or green sickness, the *febris amatoria* as it has also been called :

“She never told her love,
But let concealment, like a worm i’ the bud,
Feed on her damask cheek : she pined in thought,
And with a green and yellow melancholy
She sat like patience on a monument,
Smiling at grief.”

The alliance, or rather the resemblance, existing between pride and melancholy, is noted in *Troilus and Cressida*. Speaking of Achilles, the enquiry is made “Is he not sick?” Ajax replies :

“Yes, lion sick of a proud heart : you may call it melancholy, if you will favour the man ; but by my head it is pride.”

But the melancholy which approaches most nearly to that of Jaques is that of Antonio, the merchant of Venice. In his noble simplicity he does not parade it like Jaques, who rather prides himself on the sable plumage of his disposition. Antonio merely calls his depression sadness, and attempts not to account for it.

“In sooth, I know not why I am so sad :
It wearies me ; you say, it wearies you ;
But how I caught it, found it, or came by it,
What stuff ’tis made of, whereof it is born,
I am to learn ;
And such a want-wit sadness makes of me,
That I have much ado to know myself.”

His friends endeavour to account for the emotional phenomenon in various ways, more or less unjust. His “mind is tossing on the ocean,” and “fear of misfortune makes him sad,” or he is in love. “Fie, fie!” that folly at least is not to be imputed to the staid nobleness of his character. Then it must be constitution and the work of nature ; he’s sad because he is not merry ; “Nature hath framed strange fellows in her time ;” some will grin at anything, and others

will smile at nothing ; “Though Nestor swear the jest be laughable.”

Gratiano is still less complimentary, and attributes the sadness of his friend to the desire to gain the world’s opinion for wisdom. The downright unreserved frankness of these men to Antonio is, however, an indirect testimony to the goodness of his heart and the sweetness of his temper.

“*Gratiano.* You look not well, Signior Antonio ;
You have too much respect upon the world :
They lose it that do buy it with much care :
Believe me, you are marvellously changed.

Antonio. I hold the world but as the world, Gratiano ;
A stage where every man must play a part,
And mine a sad one.

Gra. Let me play the fool :
Why should a man, whose blood is warm within,
Sit like his grandsire cut in alabaster ?
Sleep when he wakes and creep into the jaundice
By being peevish ?
There are a sort of men whose visages
Do cream and mantle like a standing pond,
And do a wilful stillness entertain,
With purpose to be dress’d in an opinion
Of wisdom, gravity, profound conceit,
As who should say, *I am Sir Oracle,*
And, when I ope my lips let no dog bark !

* * * * *

But fish not with this melancholy bait,
For this foolgudgeon, this opinion.”

A most unjust imputation, for there are few characters in all these dramas less self-seeking than that of this princely merchant. The more probable cause of his unexplained melancholy would seem to be that

of *ennui*, arising from unruffled prosperity. Man is not born only to trouble, but a certain amount of it is good for his mental health. Without some motion of the elements, the waters of life stagnate. Antonio's melancholy has its origin in his prosperity, his unselfish disposition, and sweet temper. To have spat upon old Shylock's gaberdine was as little indication of the contrary, as to have kicked a vicious cur when he was worrying helpless children. He delivered those who made plaint to him from the Jew's forfeitures, and he despised and spat upon the wretched usurer. When real trouble comes upon him, his melancholy disappears, and he will gladly release himself from the penalties of the bond. The apparent submission to his fate, because he is "a tainted wether of the flock," and will by death avoid "the hollow eye and rumpled brow and age of poverty," all this is spoken in the magnanimous desire to relieve the wretchedness of his friends; but when the wealth, of which he was formerly so careless, is regained there is no expression of melancholy in its reception.

"Sweet lady, ye have given me life and living."

Monotonous prosperity is the cause of his morbid sadness; a strong dose of adversity its cure. The more wholesome condition is that of the middle state prayed for by the wise Agur, "Give me neither poverty nor riches, feed me with food convenient for me."

The melancholy of the Queen in King Richard the Second bears a strong resemblance to that of Antonio. A new element, however, is added, in the vague apprehension of coming evil. The sadness of the Queen, like that of Antonio, is partly constitutional, and arises in the midst of prosperity ; but, unlike it, it does not rest in the present, but throws its dark shadow into the future. This union of sadness and fear is constantly met with among the insane ; very frequently, indeed, groundless fear is the sole apparent cause of melancholia, or rather its only prominent feature. In the following passage, the Queen's explanation of the origin of sadness from fear, and Bushy's rejoinder upon the origin of fear from sadness, is a wonderful example of psychological acumen. It is remarkable that in Richard's Queen, as in Antonio, the real stroke of adversity is described as adverse to the melancholy which had free sway in prosperous times ; for when the King is led in humiliation through London, the Queen's spirit is roused, and she encourages her depressed Consort to lion-like resistance.

"Bushy. Madam, your majesty is too much sad :
You promised, when you parted with the king,
To lay aside life-harming heaviness
And entertain a cheerful disposition.

Queen. To please the king I did ; to please myself
I cannot do it ; yet I know no cause
Why I should welcome such a guest as grief,
Save bidding farewell to so sweet a guest
As my sweet Richard : yet again, methinks,
Some unborn sorrow, ripe in fortune's womb,
Is coming towards me, and my inward soul

With nothing trembles : at something it grieves,
More than with parting from my lord the king.

Bushy. Each substance of a grief hath twenty shadows,
Which shows like grief itself, but is not so :
For sorrow's eye, glazed with blinding tears,
Divides one thing entire to many objects ;
Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon
Distinguish proper form,—but eyed awry
Show nothing but confusion,—So your majesty,
Looking awry upon your lord's departure,
Find shapes of grief, more than himself, to wail ;
Which, look'd on as it is, is nought but shadows
Of what it is not. Then, thrice-gracious queen,
More than your lord's departure weep not ; more's not seen ;
Or if it be, 'tis with false sorrow's eye,
Which for things true weeps things imaginary.

Queen. It may be so ; but yet my inward soul
Persuades me it is otherwise : howe'er it be,
I cannot but be sad ; so heavy sad
As, though on thinking on no thought I think,
Makes me with heavy nothing faint and shrink."

In the above quotation I have ventured with diffidence to alter the lines in italics from the original, in which, by some accident of writing or printing, the sense appears to have been perverted to the very contrary of that which it seems to me evident that it was intended to convey. In the original, the perspective or telescope, when rightly gazed upon, is said to shew confusion, and when eyed awry, to distinguish form aright ; a statement opposed both to the context and to the fact. The text in both Collier's and Knight's editions stands thus :

" Like perspectives, which rightly gazed upon
Shew nothing but confusion,—eyed awry,
Distinguish form : so your sweet majesty," etc.

The old authors commonly used the word ‘perspective’ for telescope, and by Bishop South the word is not only used in this sense, but is employed in a simile closely parallel to the above; disturbed position being substituted for disturbed refraction.

“It being as impossible to keep the judging faculty steady in such a case, as it would be to view a thing distinctly and perfectly through a *perspective* glass held by a shaking paralytic hand.”—Vol. iii., Serm. 2.

Thus, in different characters, Shakespeare has referred to melancholy as the cause, or the consequence, or the accompaniment of various and very different emotions. The villain-melancholy described by John, the love-melancholy by Viola, the melancholy of pride in Achilles, of prosperity in Antonio, of constitution and timidity in the Queen of Richard II., of contemplation in Jaques, have their several anatomies opened to view with more skill, if less labour, than that employed by the quaint and learned diligence of old Burton, the professed dissector of the passion. In *Cymbeline*, this diversity of melancholy’s habitation is positively though poetically expressed :

“O melancholy !
Who ever yet could find thy bottom ? find
The ooze, to show what coast thy sluggish crare
Might easiliest harbour in ?”

There is but one step from *melancholy* to *music*. There is but one step from delicacy of pleasure to that of pain, and from that of pain to pleasure. Highly strung sensibility is the common term, or

rather the common condition of both. Internal or external circumstance, the events or humours of life, determine to which side the balance shall temporarily or permanently incline. According to existing state or bias, the same thing may cause or allay emotional depression. This is most remarkable in the influence exercised by music upon persons of melancholic tendency. Melancholy may be said to be the minor key of the soul, and, in finely strung organisms, the internal vibration responds to the external concord of sweet sounds. It is only the uncontemplative man of action, like Harry Hotspur, who would

“rather be a kitten, and cry mew,
Than one of those same metre ballad-mongers.”

Jaques, on the contrary, “can suck melancholy out of a song, as a weazel sucks eggs,” and finds as much enjoyment in the process. His delight in music may be correlated with many passages in the other dramas to the same effect. The most obvious and beautiful of these perhaps are to be found in the *Merchant of Venice* and *Twelfth Night*. In the former, not only is the sentiment expressed, but the reason for it is given :

“*Jessica*. I am never merry when I hear sweet music.
Lorenzo. The reason is, your spirits are attentive.”

This reason is illustrated by the effect which a trumpet sound produces upon a herd of wild colts, and the conclusion is indicated that the melancholy moved by music is that of sensibility, and is opposed to the

darker melancholy which is referred to in King John as that fit for a base action.

“The man that hath no music in himself,
Nor is not moved with concord of sweet sounds,
Is fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils ;
The motions of his spirit are dull as night,
And his affections dark as Erebus :
Let no such man be trusted.”

In *Twelfth Night* the Duke uses music with another psychological purpose :

“If music be the food of love, play on ;
Give me excess of it, that, surfeiting,
The appetite may sicken, and so die.”

The same idea is expressed by Cleopatra,

“Give me some music, music moody food
Of us that trade in love.”

It is invoked by Queen Catherine to dispel sadness :

“Take thy lute, wench ; my soul grows sad with troubles :
Sing and disperse them if thou canst.”

In some sad moods, however, it cannot be endured, as when in deep misery Richard II. exclaims :

“This music mads me ; let it sound no more ;
For though it have holp madmen to their wits,
In me it seems it will make wise men mad.”

In Ariel’s counter incantation it is used, as in Lear, to cure madness.

“A solemn air, and the best comforter
To an unsettled fancy, cure thy brains,
Now useless, boiled within thy ’skull ! There stand, etc.
. The charm dissolves apace ;
And as the morning steals upon the night,

not bad qualities, and a great man's lineage may have "crept through scoundrels ever since the flood." He would almost barter his birthright for a pot of small ale, and it is not therefore surprising that he should readily enough give up his identity when bribed with an atmosphere of sensual gratification. Consciousness and ness are not merely allied in sound. The e drollery, if there is also some inconsistency in making Sly, who is sane, accept this oft-repeated test of alienation. Sly's readiness to submit to a change of identity is proof positive, if other proofs were wanting, that this test is not trustworthy. He is at first very positive.

"What, would you make me mad? Am I not Christopher Sly, old Sly's son of Burton-heath, by birth a pedlar, by education a card-maker, by transmutation a bear-herd, and now by present profession a tinker? Ask Marian Hacket, the fat ale-wife of Wincot, if she know me not; if she say I am not fourteen pence on the score for sheer ale, score me up for the lyingest knave in Christendom. What! I am not bestrait?"

Here is identification with circumstance: but, alas, the tempter comes to prove all this is but a strange lunacy, and to proffer the delights of lordly luxury, and the sensualist gives up his past existence to embrace that of the sybarite. After all it is but a change of manner.

"Am I a lord? and have I such a lady?
Or do I dream? or have I dream'd till now?
I do not sleep: I see, I hear, I speak;

I smell sweet savours and I feel soft things :
Upon my life, I am a lord indeed
And not a tinker nor Christopher Sly.
Well, bring our lady hither to our sight ;
And once again, a pot o' the smallest ale."

Self-identification is, indeed, no test of sanity or insanity. An insane man, who fancies himself made of butter or of glass, is not convinced to the contrary by fire not melting him or blows not breaking him, and is not likely to be convinced by the persistence of ordinary sensation in a substance which ought to be senseless. The power of the delusion which overlooks the attributes of that which it believes to exist, is not likely to succumb to the attributes of that which it believes not to exist. Moreover, sensation may be defective or perverted, while emotion and intellect remain sound. The prick of Lear's pin might be inflicted on a limb which had lost the sense of feeling ; and if the organs of vision had been affected, Sebastian might neither have seen the glorious sun nor the pearl, or might have seen them multiplied or distorted.

"This is the air ; that is the glorious sun :
This pearl she gave me, I do feel't and see't :
And though 'tis wonder that enwraps me thus,
Yet 'tis not madness.
For though my soul disputes well with my sense,
That this may be some error, but no madness,
Yet doth this accident and flood of fortune
So far exceed all instance, all discourse,
That I am ready to mistrust mine eyes,
And wrangle with my reason that persuades me
To any other trust, but that I am mad ;
Or else the lady's mad, yet, if 'twere so,

She would not sway her house, command her followers,
 Take and give back affairs, and their despatch,
 With such a smooth, discreet, and stable bearing,
 As I perceive she does : there's something in't
 That is deceivable."

Twelfth Night.

In the *Comedy of Errors*, madness is imputed to four of the principal characters, namely, to the two pairs of twins. There is more of fanciful incident than of delineation of character in this piece. The idea of insanity first presents itself to the mind of the courtesan to whom Antipholus of Ephesus denies the ring he has had from her. The idea once suggested is eagerly seized upon by his shrewish wife and her partisans to interpret the violent and absurd conduct of her lord. Mistaken identity is again the pivot of the imputed madness, but in this instance the mistake is not made by the subject of it, but by the public. Adriana procures the assistance of a conjuring exorcist, Pinch. The marks of anger are interpreted into the signs of madness.

"Alas, how fiery and how sharp he looks!"

"Mark, how he trembles in his ecstasy!"

"*Pinch.* Give me your hand and let me feel your pulse.

Ant. E. There is my hand, and let it feel your ear.

[Striking him.]

Pinch. I charge thee, Satan, housed within this man,
 To yield possession to my holy prayers,
 And to thy state of darkness hie thee straight :
 I conjure thee by all the saints in heaven!"

This of course adds fuel to the fire of the angry man's excitement ; discussion leads to violence; master

and man overpowered and bound together are put in a dark and damp vault.

Antipholus and Dromio of Syracuse, the other halves of the identity, as they may be called, take refuge from their persecutions in the sanctuary of the cloister. The interview o the Abbess with the zealous and jealous wife is the fine passage of the play. Adriana must have drawn upon her fancy for the account of the premonitory symptoms, or have thus interpreted the ill-humour caused by her own shrewish temper. The Abbess makes a wrong guess or two at the cause, but her keen eye reads the only probable one in the feature language of the wife. The manner in which she inveigles the latter into self-accusation, and then describes the distracting effect of domestic cark and worry is finely graphic.

"Abbess. How long hath this possession held the man ?

*Adriana. This week he hath been heavy, sour, sad,
And much different from the man he was ;
But till this afternoon his passion
Ne'er brake into extremity of rage.*

*Abb. Hath he not lost much wealth by wreck of sea ?
Buried some dear friend ? Hath not else his eye
Stray'd his affection in unlawful love ?
A sin prevailing much in youthful men,
Who give their eyes the liberty of gazing.
Which of these sorrows is he subject to ?*

*Adr. To none of these, except it be the last ;
Namely, some love that drew him oft from home.*

Abb. You should for that have reprehended him.

Adr. Why, so I did.

Abb. Ay, but not rough enough.

Adr. As roughly as my modesty would let me.

Abb. Haply, in private.

Adr. And in assemblies too.

Abb. Ay, but not enough.

Adr. It was the copy of our conference :

In bed he slept not for my urging it ;

At board he fed not for my urging it ;

Alone, it was the subject of my theme ;

In company I often glanced it ;

Still did I tell him it was vile and bad.

Abb. And thereof came it that the man was mad :

The venom clamours of a jealous woman

Poison more deadly than a mad dog's tooth.

It seems his sleeps were hindered by thy railing ;

And therefore comes it that his head is light.

Thou say'st his meat was sauced with thy upbraiding :

Unquiet meals make ill digestions ;

Thereof the raging fire of fever bred ;

And what's a fever but a fit of madness ?

Thou say'st his sports were hinder'd by thy brawls :

Sweet recreation barr'd, what doth ensue

But moody and dull melancholy,

Kinsman to grim and comfortless despair,

And at her heels a huge infectious troop

Of pale distempers and foes to life ?

In food, in sport and life-preserving rest

To be disturb'd would mad or man or beast :

The consequence is then thy jealous fits

Have scared thy husband from the use of wits."

The imputation of disordered mind is cast upon many other characters in these dramas, but in no other is there a discussion or, so to say, an inquisition upon the truth of the fact, except in *Measure for Measure*, when Isabella throws herself before the Duke, praying for justice upon his hypocrite deputy, the saintly Angelo. The imputation of disordered intellect is here made in all seriousness, to discredit

the accuser and avert the punishment of crime. Angelo replies to the maiden's denunciation.

"Angelo. My lord, her wits, I fear me, are not firm :
She hath been a suitor to me for her brother
. Cut off by cause of justice,—

Isabel. By cause of justice !

Angelo. And she will speak most bitterly and strange.
Isabel. Most strange, and yet most truly, will I speak."

The accusation is made, and the Duke answers in well-assumed belief in Angelo's truth and Isabella's distractedness ; thus eliciting from her that discrimination between the impossible and the improbable, which ought never to be lost sight of, in estimating dubious statements of suspected minds.

"Duke. Away with her ! Poor soul,
She speaks this in the infirmity of sense.

Isabel. O prince, I conjure thee, as thou believest
There is another comfort than this world,
That thou neglect me not, with that opinion

. That I am touch'd with madness ! Make not impossible
That which but seems unlike."

The Duke accepts the distinction, and applies the best possible test to the reasonableness of the statement, namely, the just consequence of one idea on another, the "dependency of thing on thing."

"Duke. By mine honesty,
If she is mad,—as I believe no other,—
Her madness hath the oddest frame of sense,
Such a dependency of thing on thing,
As e'er I heard in madness.

Isabel. O gracious duke,
Harp not on that, nor do not banish reason
For inequality ; but let your reason serve
To make the truth appear where it seems hid."

This imputation of insanity to smother truth is as old as the time when it was replied to by the great apostle of truth, in the very spirit of Isabella's appeal: "I am not mad, most noble Festus, but speak forth the words of truth and soberness." The test which the Duke applies is the only one valid in regard to the reason, although it is opposed to Locke's theory that madmen reason right on wrong premises. But the right statement of the premises is a great part of the reasoning process: the dependency of one premise on another being duly set forth, the conclusion follows as a matter of course. Hence it follows, that although it may be needful to apply other tests to ascertain the soundness of other functions of the mind, that of the reason, strictly so called, must ever be estimated by the due sequence of ideas, the "dependency of thing on thing."

THE END.

REFERENCE

